



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS

TUESDAY — 24 MAY 2022



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HEADLINE	05/23 Ukraine: 49 Russians face war crimes trials
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/davos-wef-russia-ukraine/2022/05/23/id/1071133/

GIST	<p>Ukrainian Prosecutor-General Iryna Venediktova announced Monday during the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, that authorities have opened 49 war crimes trials so far against Russian soldiers, Newsweek reported.</p> <p>Venediktova told attendees at a panel organized by the Victor Pinchuk Foundation that Russian forces have engaged in "heinous crimes" against Ukrainians since their invasion of the country began in late February.</p> <p>"We have already initiated close to 13,000 cases which are connected only to war crimes," the Ukrainian prosecutor said.</p> <p>"In this category, suspicions were reported [about] 49 individuals, which we started to prosecute [for] war crimes," she continued, adding that authorities have gathered a list of around 600 suspects thought to have engaged in war crimes.</p> <p>Courts are already hearing two cases involving three Russian soldiers, Venediktova confirmed. In total, she counted 4,600 total civilian deaths in the conflict so far, including 232 children.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Venediktova claimed the Kremlin is engaging in forced deportations of Ukrainian civilians into Russia, where they are allegedly being interrogated, "tortured," and held in "filtration camps."</p> <p>"Russia uses the practice of forced transfer of civilian populations, especially in children, to Russian territories," Venediktova said. "Tens of thousands of people have been forcibly relocated. Children are separated from families and put into the foster care system available for adoption in Russia. One can only imagine the stress children are going through."</p> <p>"Russia also opened makeshift filtration camps, detaining and subjecting civilians to brutal interrogations and torture for any supposed links to the Ukrainian government," she further stated.</p> <p>Venediktova's comments in Davos came shortly before 21-year-old Russian Sgt. Vadim Shishimarin became the first soldier in the conflict convicted of war crimes, according to Newsweek.</p> <p>Shishimarin pleaded guilty to the killing of a 62-year-old Ukrainian civilian at the beginning of the war in February. He was sentenced to life in prison.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/24 Russia winning food crisis it created
SOURCE	https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/russia-is-winning-from-the-global-food-crisis-it-helped-create-1.1769842
GIST	<p>(Bloomberg) -- Russia's war against Ukraine, while deepening a global food crisis, has made the invader among the biggest winners of the mess it helped create.</p> <p>The war has blocked Ukraine's grain exports by sea, cutting off vital supplies for countries from Somalia to Egypt. The disruption, topped by hot weather and droughts that are hurting wheat crops in other parts of the world, has sent prices of the grain to near-record highs and is threatening hunger in parts of the Middle East and North Africa.</p> <p>Russia has continued to ship its wheat at the now-higher price, finding willing buyers and raking in more revenues per ton. It is also expecting a bumper wheat crop in the next season, suggesting it will continue to profit from the situation. Global wheat prices have risen by more than 50% this year, and the Kremlin has collected \$1.9 billion in revenues from wheat export taxes so far this season, according to estimates from agricultural consultant SovEcon.</p> <p>"This is using food as a weapon of war through global leverage rather than directly attacking a population," said Tim Benton, Research Director for Emerging Risks at Chatham House, alluding to</p>

Russian comments that it would only unblock the Ukrainian port of Odesa if sanctions are relaxed. "From a political perspective we are in a kind of new place because of the importance of grain markets."

By blocking Ukraine's ports, Russia has forced that country to try and ship grain by land, resulting in exports of only about a quarter of its usual potential volumes.

"Failure to open up the ports is a declaration of war on global food security," David Beasley, the head of the United Nations' World Food Program, said at the World Economic Forum in Davos on Monday. Beasley said the lack of access to food may spur millions of people to migrate.

Every 1% increase in hunger results in a 2% increase in migration, he said, noting that 49 million people were "knocking on famine's door" in 43 countries. "Those are the 43 countries we've got to be extremely concerned about that will result in destabilization and mass migration if we don't get ahead of this," he said.

Russia and Ukraine are major suppliers of wheat and sunflower oil to the world. Ukraine also ranks among the top six exporters of corn, chicken and honey. It has traditionally shipped millions of tons of grains a year via the Black Sea, earning about 10% of its gross domestic product from its agriculture and food sector. The two are among the few countries in the world that export big volumes of the food they grow to many countries.

While Russia ran into some short-lived problems immediately after the invasion, it's now delivering its agricultural produce at a faster pace than last year — with international traders like Viterro and Cargill still making shipments. It even shipped some volumes to Israel, which often buys from Ukraine, according to AgFlow. Russian wheat shipments for the 2021-22 season totaled 34.1m tons as of this week, down 11% from a year earlier, Interfax reported.

Russia has also effectively sidelined a key competitor, said Hugo Boudet, an analyst at AgFlow, noting that between April 1 and May 23 Russia significantly boosted its shipments of grain to countries including Turkey and Iran compared to last year. "Ukraine had been the main competitor," he said. "You put this together and Russia has a big advantage in this area because of there being less competition" and crop production dwindling in 2022 in the Middle East and North Africa. "A lot of people talk about bans on Russian goods, but the fact is these importing countries did not take any direct action against agricultural goods from Russia."

The current trends are likely to last for the foreseeable future. In Ukraine, farmers have been planting for the next season under the threat of bombs, and even clearing dead bodies from their land. For its part, Russia is expected to reap a record harvest in the new season thanks to good weather. In contrast, other big wheat suppliers from the US to Western Europe are seeing droughts that are threatening their crops. Russia has also dominated shipments of sunflower oil since the war began, after Ukraine's exports by sea were cut off.

"Food from the Russia perspective becomes an economic sector where it has political and economic leverage," said Chatham House's Benton. "Over the next years or so, you can imagine Russia saying, we grow lots of grain, we'll give it to you if you support us."

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy has said that Russia is stealing its grain in occupied regions. Two Ukrainian traders said that the Russian military confiscated grain and goods in occupied areas. Egypt refused to allow a shipment of undocumented Ukrainian wheat to land at its ports.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov agreed that a food crisis is being created but blamed "those who imposed sanctions against us and the sanctions themselves that are in effect." US and European sanctions do not explicitly target food exports, but some measures on banks have made financing more complicated. The cost of insuring and shipping Russian grain spiked after the invasion due to the sanctions and the risks have increased of sailing in the Black Sea, where some ships were hit by shelling at the beginning of the war.

	While the Russian state's coffers are swelling with commodity export revenues, its citizens are also suffering from rapid food-price rises. Russia may be self-sufficient in raw materials like grain and sugar, but it relies on imports for everything from packaging to processed food and essential flavorings and ingredients. Foreign companies from Nestle SA to Unilever Plc left or limited operations in Russia after the invasion. An initial wave of panic-buying after the war began may have subsided, but food inflation is at the highest since at least 2004.
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HEADLINE	05/24 Officials: Title 42 won't slow crossings
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/24/politics/title-42-border-crossings/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A court ruling blocking the termination of a Trump-era pandemic restriction at the US-Mexico border is unlikely to slow border crossings, Biden administration officials say, as migration in the Western hemisphere reaches new highs.</p> <p>Since taking office, President Joe Biden has faced mounting pressure over his handling of the US-Mexico border, dividing members of his own party following a decision by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to lift Title 42, which allows authorities to swiftly turn people away at the border, effectively barring migrants from seeking asylum.</p> <p>Republicans hammered the administration for not being tough enough on the border. Some Democrats and immigrant advocates, meanwhile, say the White House has waited too long to rescind it. Regardless, a federal court ruling means the administration will be forced to keep it in effect for now.</p> <p>Along the northern border of Mexico, advocates say some migrants remain undeterred and desperate. "I don't think that just because Title 42 didn't go away today that people are thinking that was the one and only way they were going to get over," said Sam Bishop, Mexico country director for Global Response Management.</p> <p>"To me, the lack of some sort of visible and major outcry today in particular or since Friday, is kind of an indication that this isn't the only thing they're necessarily waiting for," Bishop, who works directly with migrants, added.</p> <p>Over the weekend, following the court ruling, Border Patrol agents arrested more than 500 migrants in the Rio Grande Valley sector alone, which covers south Texas, according to US Customs and Border Protection. And in Yuma, Arizona, border agents arrested over 1,500 migrants in a 24-hour period over the weekend, a Homeland Security official told CNN.</p> <p>Migration is at new highs amid deteriorating conditions in Latin America that were exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. At the US southern border, about 40% of border crossers are now from countries outside of Mexico and the Northern Triangle countries of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, according to a Homeland Security official.</p> <p>The Department of Homeland Security, officials say, is operating under the belief that numbers will remain high even with Covid-19 border restrictions still in place. The number of border crossings generally increase in the spring, but the current pace of record numbers highlights the continued urgency on the US-Mexico border.</p> <p>For months, DHS prepared for the future lifting of Title 42, which was invoked at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, while grappling with around 7,000 border crossers daily.</p> <p>In a statement following Friday's ruling, DHS maintained the department would press forward with preparations to manage a potential increase of migrants at the border. Officials are also racing to strike agreements with countries in the region to stem the flow of migrants journeying to the US southern border.</p>

DHS is similarly working with Mexico to mitigate traffic along key areas on the US southern border, like patrols, checkpoints, and going after smugglers, the agency official said.

More than 6 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants have fled the country, according to DHS. Nicaraguans have also increasingly been migrating, as well as Haitians who had moved to the region years ago. Arrangements on migration management have already been struck with Costa Rica and Panama -- two countries that migrants pass through when heading to the US southern border.

In the interim, though, a range of nationalities continue to journey to the US southern border. Some of those pose a challenge to the Biden administration because they can't easily be expelled under Title 42 or deported -- at times, fueling more migrants from those regions.

Cubans, for example, are more difficult to expel given poor US-Cuba relations. Between last October and April, border authorities stopped nearly 114,000 Cubans along the US-Mexico border, far outpacing recent years, CBP data shows.

"What US enforcement policy tends to do over the long term is shape who comes, rather than how many people come," said Andrew Selee, president of the Migration Policy Institute, a nonpartisan think tank.

Still, Republicans and vulnerable Democrats urged the Biden administration to keep Title 42 in effect, arguing it was a necessary tool until a comprehensive plan to manage the border was in place.

Friday's ruling, which found the administration should've gone through the months-long rulemaking process before terminating the authority, means Title 42 will likely stay in place for months to come.

"We'll continue seeing the bottle neck on the Mexican side of the border and it really doesn't resolve much," Tucson, Arizona, Mayor Regina Romero told CNN, when asked about Friday's ruling. "I've said over and over again that Title 42 is not an immigration tool. It is a public health order."

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HEADLINE	05/23 Ukraine: worst military loss in war
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/world/ukraine-reveals-worst-military-loss-of-russia-war
GIST	<p>Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy revealed Monday that 87 soldiers died last week in a Russian strike on a barracks housing troops, making it the largest military loss from a single attack in the ongoing war.</p> <p>The deadly incident happened on Tuesday, May 17, in the town of Desna, just north of Ukraine's capital of Kyiv, according to Reuters.</p> <p>"Today we completed work at Desna. In Desna, under the rubble, there were 87 casualties. Eighty-seven corpses," Zelenskyy was quoted as saying Monday.</p> <p>Ukraine earlier said only eight people died in the attack, but the new figure of 87 makes it the highest loss of life in a single attack from the war, Reuters reports.</p> <p>Russia claims it hit the Ukraine military training base with long-range missiles.</p> <p>As the war rages on though, Russia is also losing a large number of troops, according to the United Kingdom's Ministry of Defense.</p> <p>"In the first three months of its 'special military operation', Russia has likely suffered a similar death toll to that experienced by the Soviet Union during its nine-year war in Afghanistan," the agency tweeted Monday, referencing the 15,000 Soviet forces believed to be lost in that conflict.</p>

	"A combination of poor low-level tactics, limited air cover, a lack of flexibility, and a command approach which is prepared to reinforce failure and repeat mistakes has led to this high casualty rate, which continues to rise in the Donbas offensive," it added.
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HEADLINE	05/24 Michigan rolling blackouts this summer?
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/renewable-energy-dependence-michigan-rolling-blackouts
GIST	<p>Electrical-grid operators are warning Michigan residents that blackouts could be needed during the hot summer months, with a hurried changeover to renewable energy sources at the forefront of the issue.</p> <p>"Our leaders need to be real cognizant of the day-to-day impact," Joe Trotter, the Energy, Environment, and Agriculture Task Force director for the American Legislative Exchange Council, said of switching to renewable energy when reached by Fox News. "It's great to look at the future, but the present has a huge impact on their constituencies."</p> <p>Trotter's concerns come after the Midcontinent Independent System Operator's seasonal assessment found "capacity shortfalls in both the north and central regions of MISO... leaving those areas at increased risk of temporary, controlled outages to preserve the integrity of the bulk electric system," JT Smith, the MISO executive director, told NPR earlier this week.</p> <p>That reality could lead to controlled outages in Michigan this summer, a step MISO said has never been taken in the state before.</p> <p>MISO said an unusually hot summer in the state will stress the grid, with MISO projecting a peak forecast of 124 gigawatts, higher than the current 119 GW of available power generation.</p> <p>But hot weather isn't the only reason Michigan could face an electrical shortfall this summer, with Trotter telling Fox News that too many traditional power plants are being shut down as grid operators attempt to switch over to renewable sources of energy.</p> <p>"With the rise of solar and wind, it's highly dependent on external factors that are not controllable," Trotter said.</p> <p>Solar and wind power, favorites of those hoping to switch the country over to greener sources of energy, don't have the capability to generate power 24 hours a day. To alleviate this issue, batteries that can store energy for later use are being developed. But Trotter noted technology does not currently have the capacity to meet demand, while prices for the batteries are far outpacing traditional power generation sources such as natural gas.</p> <p>That hasn't stopped policymakers from steaming ahead with replacing traditional sources of energy, which has seen coal and natural gas plants shut down at a faster pace than infrastructure to support renewable energy can be built.</p> <p>"They're taking coal plants offline," Trotter said.</p> <p>"There's this focus on a much more long-term solution to replace it with renewables," he added, but argued that those solutions are "years or decades away from being able to replace the coal."</p> <p>Michigan Republican State Rep. Jack O'Malley told Fox News that he has seen a similar issue, arguing that the pace traditional plants are closing is likely too ambitious.</p> <p>"What we have is a generation problem," O'Malley said. "I think it's a combination of an honest effort to reduce carbon, which I think everyone is for. The problem is I think there are some unrealistic thoughts from some people on the environmental side. That is that wind and solar can carry the day."</p>

O'Malley noted that many environmentally conscious policymakers are opposed to less environmentally damaging forms of traditional energy production, such as nuclear energy and natural gas, even though these forms of production could help make up for energy shortfalls.

"I am all for renewable, but we also have to look at what makes sense," O'Malley said.

The problem is not just limited to Michigan, with electric-grid operators from across the country warning of similar issues in other regions.

[California's grid operator](#) warned last week that extreme heat and wildfires over the summer could lead to a shortage of energy, while Texas has been plagued by issues with its grid in recent years.

"Every market around the world is trying to deal with the same issue," Brad Jones, the interim chief executive of the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, told the Wall Street Journal last week. "We're all trying to find ways to utilize as much of our renewable resources as possible... and at the same time make sure that we have enough dispatchable generation to manage reliability."

Trotter noted that part of the issue stems from a lack of compatible infrastructure to accept power generation from renewable sources, even if those sources were ready to accept the large demand of the hot summer months.

He argued that the solution in the short run is to keep traditional power plants operational, but questioned whether policymakers had the "political will to do it."

"The solution is to try to keep these plants open," Trotter said. "If the concern is coal itself, you can convert to natural gas."

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HEADLINE	05/24 White House: Quad joint leaders' statement
SOURCE	https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/05/24/quad-joint-leaders-statement/
GIST	<p>Today, we – Prime Minister Anthony Albanese of Australia, Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida of Japan, and President Joe Biden of the United States – convene in Tokyo to renew our steadfast commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific that is inclusive and resilient.</p> <p>Just over one year ago, Leaders met for the first time. Today in Tokyo, we convene for our fourth meeting, and our second in person, to demonstrate, at a time of profound global challenge, that the Quad is a force for good, committed to bringing tangible benefits to the region. In our first year of cooperation, we established the Quad's dedication to a positive and practical agenda; in our second year, we are committed to deliver on this promise, making the region more resilient for the 21st century.</p> <p>With the COVID-19 pandemic still inflicting human and economic pain around the world, tendencies for unilateral actions among states and a tragic conflict raging in Ukraine, we are steadfast. We strongly support the principles of freedom, rule of law, democratic values, sovereignty and territorial integrity, peaceful settlement of disputes without resorting to threat or use of force, any unilateral attempt to change the status quo, and freedom of navigation and overflight, all of which are essential to the peace, stability and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region and to the world. We will continue to act decisively together to advance these principles in the region and beyond. We reaffirm our resolve to uphold the international rules-based order where countries are free from all forms of military, economic and political coercion.</p> <p>Peace and Stability</p> <p>We discussed our respective responses to the conflict in Ukraine and the ongoing tragic humanitarian crisis, and assessed its implications for the Indo-Pacific. Quad Leaders reiterated our strong resolve to maintain the peace and stability in the region. We underscored unequivocally that the centerpiece of the international order is international law, including the UN Charter, respect for sovereignty and territorial</p>

integrity of all states. We also emphasized that all countries must seek peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law.

The Quad is committed to cooperation with partners in the region who share the vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific. We reaffirm our unwavering support for ASEAN unity and centrality and for the practical implementation of ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. We welcome the EU's Joint Communication on the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific which was announced in September 2021 and increased European engagement in the Indo-Pacific region. We will champion adherence to international law, particularly as reflected in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and the maintenance of freedom of navigation and overflight, to meet challenges to the maritime rules-based order, including in the East and South China Seas. We strongly oppose any coercive, provocative or unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo and increase tensions in the area, such as the militarization of disputed features, the dangerous use of coast guard vessels and maritime militia, and efforts to disrupt other countries' offshore resource exploitation activities.

Individually and collectively, we will further strengthen our cooperation with Pacific island countries, to enhance their economic well being, strengthen health infrastructure and environmental resilience, to improve their maritime security and sustain their fisheries, to provide sustainable infrastructure, to bolster educational opportunities, and to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, which pose especially serious challenges for this region. We are committed to working together to address the needs of Pacific island partners. We reaffirmed our support for Pacific Islands Forum unity and for Pacific regional security frameworks.

Among ourselves and with our partners, we will deepen our cooperation in multilateral institutions, including at the United Nations, where reinforcing our shared priorities to reform and enhance the resilience of the multilateral system itself. Individually and together, we will respond to the challenges of our time, ensuring that the region remains inclusive, open, and governed by universal rules and norms.

We reaffirm our commitment to the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, consistent with United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) and also reconfirm the necessity of immediate resolution of the issue of Japanese abductees. We also condemn North Korea's destabilizing ballistic missile development and launches, including multiple intercontinental ballistic missile tests, in violation of UNSCRs, and call on the international community to fully implement these resolutions. We urge North Korea to abide by all of its obligations under the UNSCRs, refrain from provocations, and engage in substantive dialogue.

We remain deeply concerned by the crisis in Myanmar, which has caused grave humanitarian suffering and posed challenges to regional stability. We continue to call for the immediate end to violence in Myanmar, the release of all political detainees, including foreigners, engagement in constructive dialogue, humanitarian access, and the swift restoration of democracy. We reaffirm our support for ASEAN-led efforts to seek a solution in Myanmar and welcome the role of Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair. We further call for the urgent implementation of the ASEAN Five Point Consensus.

We condemn unequivocally terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations and reiterate that there can be no justification for acts of terror on any grounds whatsoever. We denounce the use of terrorist proxies and emphasize the importance of denying any logistical, financial or military support to terrorist groups which could be used to launch or plan terror attacks, including cross-border attacks. We reiterate our condemnation of terrorist attacks, including 26/11 Mumbai and Pathankot attacks. We also reaffirm UNSC Resolution 2593 (2021), which demands that Afghan territory must never again be used to threaten or attack any country or to shelter or train terrorists, or to plan or finance terrorist attacks. We emphasize the importance of upholding international standards on anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism by all countries, consistent with FATF recommendations. We reaffirm that in our fight against global terrorism, we will take concerted action against all terrorist groups, including those individuals and entities designated pursuant to the UNSC Resolution 1267(1999).

COVID-19 and Global Health Security

For more than two years, the world has grappled with the devastating impacts of COVID-19 – on our communities, citizens, health workers and systems and economies. The Quad countries have led and will continue to lead global efforts for COVID-19 response, with a view to building better health security and strengthening health systems. We commit to adapt our collective approaches to get ahead of the virus with a focus on preparing for new variants, and getting vaccines, tests, treatments, and other medical products to those at highest risk.

To date, the Quad partners have collectively pledged approximately USD \$ 5.2 billion to the COVAX AMC, approximately 40 percent of the total contributions from government donors. We are proud to have delivered over 670 million doses, including at least 265 million doses to Indo-Pacific. Noting significant expansion in the global supply of COVID-19 vaccines, we will continue to share safe, effective, affordable and quality-assured COVID-19 vaccines where and when they are needed.

We welcome the progress on the expansion of J&J vaccine production at the Biological E facility in India under the Quad Vaccine Partnership– sustainable manufacturing capacity will yield long-term benefit in the fight against COVID-19 and future pandemics. In this regard, we look forward to the grant of WHO’s EUL approvals regarding the aforementioned vaccines in India. We celebrate the donation by the Quad to Cambodia and Thailand of WHO approved Made in India vaccines, together with Quad members’ other vaccine related support, as an example of tangible achievement of our collaboration.

We will continue to address both the COVID-19 response and preparedness against future health threats. We will accelerate getting shots in arms through last mile support of which over 2 billion USD has been provided in more than 115 countries globally by our four countries, and will also address vaccine hesitancy through a Quad-convened event this week at the World Health Assembly. We will coordinate our efforts including through the “COVID-19 Prioritized Global Action Plan for Enhanced Engagement (GAP),” and COVAX Vaccine Delivery Partnership. We welcome the successful 2nd Global COVID-19 Summit co-hosted by the United States, and joined by the Quad members, which galvanized \$3.2 billion in financial and policy commitments. We will strengthen support for economic and social revitalization in the Indo-Pacific region.

In the long term, we will strengthen the global health architecture and pandemic prevention, preparedness and response (PPR) to build better health security, including by enhancing finance and health coordination and bolstering on-going science and technology cooperation, such as through clinical trials and genomic surveillance. Building on existing Quad collaboration, we will enhance our capacity to improve early detection and monitor new and emerging pathogens with pandemic potential, and work to increase resilience to epidemics and pandemics. For the development of new vaccines to prevent and contain infectious diseases, Quad partners have collectively committed \$524 million to the next phase of CEPI’s work, accounting for about 50 percent of the total public investors.

We commit, as members of the Group of Friends of UHC, to take global leadership to further strengthen and reform the global health architecture for enhancing PPR and promoting UHC in the lead up to the UN High Level Meeting on UHC to be held in 2023.

Infrastructure

We reaffirmed our shared commitment to deepen cooperation on infrastructure, which is critical to driving productivity and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region. We also share a commitment to addressing debt issues, which have been exacerbated by the pandemic in many countries.

Quad partners bring decades of skills and experience together to catalyse infrastructure delivery to the region. We are committed to working closely with partners and the region to drive public and private investment to bridge gaps. To achieve this, Quad will seek to extend more than 50 billion USD of infrastructure assistance and investment in the Indo-Pacific, over the next five years.

We will work to strengthen capacities of the countries in need to cope with debt issues under the G20 Common Framework and by promoting debt sustainability and transparency in close collaboration with

finance authorities of relevant countries, including through the “Quad Debt Management Resource Portal,” which consists of multiple bilateral and multilateral capacity building assistance.

We also welcome the meeting of the development finance institutions and agencies of the four countries in the margins of the Quad Leaders’ Meeting. We are working closely with experts, our region and each other to link our toolkits and expertise to better connect the Indo-Pacific.

We will further deepen collaboration and pursue complementary actions in identified areas, such as regional and digital connectivity, clean energy, and climate resilience including disaster resilience in energy related facilities that reflect the region’s priorities including ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, to contribute to sustainable and inclusive growth in the region.

Climate

Recognizing the urgent need to address climate change as emphasized in the latest IPCC reports, we will steadfastly implement the Paris Agreement and deliver on the outcomes of COP26, accelerating our efforts to raise global ambition, including reaching out to key stakeholders in the Indo-Pacific region and supporting, strengthening, and enhancing climate actions by partners in the region including through mobilizing climate finance, both public and private, and facilitating the research, development, and deployment of innovative technology.

Today, we launch the “Quad Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Package (Q-CHAMP)” with “mitigation” and “adaptation” as its two themes. Q-CHAMP includes ongoing activities under the Quad Climate Working Group on: green shipping and ports aiming for a shared green corridor framework building on each Quad country’s input; clean energy cooperation in clean hydrogen and methane emissions from the natural gas sector; strengthening clean energy supply chains, welcoming the contribution of the Sydney Energy Forum; climate information services for developing an engagement strategy with Pacific island countries; and disaster risk reduction, including disaster and climate resilient infrastructure such as the efforts through the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI). Its coverage includes new cooperation in clean fuel ammonia, CCUS/Carbon Recycling, cooperation and capacity building support to advance high integrity carbon markets under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, climate-smart agriculture, knowledge sharing on subnational climate actions, and ecosystem-based adaptation. To make Q-CHAMP tangible, we are committed to expanding our programs, in support of climate actions between our four countries as well as in the Indo-Pacific region. We recognize the immense challenges posed by climate change to the island nations of the Pacific.

We welcome the new Australian Government’s commitment to stronger action on climate change, including through passing legislation to achieve net zero by 2050 and lodging a new, ambitious Nationally Determined Contribution.

Cybersecurity

In an increasingly digital world with sophisticated cyber threats we recognize an urgent need to take a collective approach to enhancing cybersecurity. To deliver on the Quad Leaders’ vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific, we commit to improving the defense of our nations’ critical infrastructure by sharing threat information, identifying and evaluating potential risks in supply chains for digitally enabled products and services, and aligning baseline software security standards for government procurement, leveraging our collective purchasing power to improve the broader software development ecosystem so that all users can benefit. The Quad partners will coordinate capacity building programs in the Indo-Pacific region under the Quad Cybersecurity Partnership, and will initiate the first-ever Quad Cybersecurity Day to help individual internet users across our nations, the Indo-Pacific region, and beyond to better protect themselves from cyber threats.

Critical & Emerging Technologies

The Quad remains focused on harnessing critical and emerging technologies to enhance the prosperity and security of the region. In the area of 5G and beyond 5G, while welcoming the Prague Proposals on Telecommunications Supplier Diversity, we will advance interoperability and security through the signature of a new Memorandum of Cooperation on 5G Supplier Diversification and Open RAN. We are

also deepening our engagement with industry, including through Open RAN Track 1.5 events, and exploring ways to collaborate on the deployment of open and secure telecommunications technologies in the region.

We have mapped the Quad's capacity and vulnerabilities in global semiconductor supply chains and have decided to better leverage our complementary strengths to realize a diverse and competitive market for semiconductors. The Common Statement of Principles on Critical Technology Supply Chains, launched on the occasion of this Summit, advances our cooperation on semiconductors and other critical technologies, providing a cooperative foundation for enhancing our resilience against various risks to the region. Our cooperation in the international standardization organizations, such as the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau of the International Telecommunication Union, has made great progress, and we expect to strengthen such cooperation through the new International Standards Cooperation Network (ISCN). This cooperation will help ensure technology development in the region is guided by our shared democratic values. We continue to strengthen our horizon scanning cooperation following our deepened discussions in biotechnology through our efforts on mapping and a corresponding Track 1.5 and a future focus on quantum technologies. We will convene a business and investment forum for networking with industry partners to expand capital for critical and emerging technologies.

Quad Fellowship

We recognize that people to people ties are the bedrock of the Quad and welcome the official launch of the Quad Fellowship, which is now open for application. The Quad Fellowship will bring 100 students from our countries to the United States each year to pursue graduate degrees in STEM fields, and is administered by Schmidt Futures. The first class of Quad Fellows will begin their studies in the third quarter of 2023, and we look forward to building together a talented cohort of next-generation STEM minds who will lead our countries in cutting-edge research and innovation.

Space

Space-related applications and technologies can also contribute to addressing common challenges such as climate change, disaster preparedness and response, and sustainable uses of oceans and marine resources. Each Quad partner will endeavor to improve public access to Earth observation satellite data and applications. We will work together to create an Earth observation-based monitoring and sustainable development framework. We will endeavor to share space-based civil Earth observation data, along with providing a "Quad Satellite Data Portal" that aggregates links to our respective national satellite data resources. We will work together to develop space applications, including in the area of Earth observations, and provide capacity building support to countries in the region, including with regards to partnering on using space capabilities to respond to extreme precipitation events. We will also consult on rules, norms, guidelines and principles for the sustainable use of space, and extend support to countries in the region through joint workshops including in relation to the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) Guidelines for the Long-Term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities.

Maritime Domain Awareness and HADR

We welcome a new maritime domain awareness initiative, the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA), designed to work with regional partners to respond to humanitarian and natural disasters, and combat illegal fishing. IPMDA will support and work in consultation with Indo-Pacific nations and regional information fusion centers in the Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands by providing technology and training to support enhanced, shared maritime domain awareness to promote stability and prosperity in our seas and oceans. IPMDA embodies what the Quad stands for: catalyzing our joint efforts towards concrete results that help to make the region more stable and prosperous.

Delivering on our commitment following our virtual meeting on 3 March 2022, we announce today the establishment of the "Quad Partnership on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) in the Indo-Pacific". This Partnership will further strengthen our collaboration to effectively respond to disasters in the region.

Closing

	Today, with a shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific, we once again emphasize the importance of fundamental values and principles, and commit to work tirelessly to deliver tangible results to the region. In doing so, we will regularize the Quad activities, including regular meetings by the Leaders and Foreign Ministers. We agree to hold our next in-person summit in 2023 hosted by Australia.
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HEADLINE	05/24 Keeping out of China Covid lockdown
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/05/24/china-covid-lockdown-testing-green/
GIST	<p>BEIJING — It sounds like a sci-fi movie: personal codes that grant you access to society or turn you into a pariah.</p> <p>In China, this high-tech reality is here. These health mobile codes are updated in real time with your latest coronavirus test information and movements around town. Lose your green-code status, and you could be locked out of public spaces for days or weeks.</p> <p>Officials tout the system as an innovative way to do what virtually no other nation is still attempting: eradicate all outbreaks of the fast-moving omicron variant of the coronavirus. It's a staggeringly expensive campaign to test tens of millions of people daily, and there's no end in sight.</p> <p>Remember Tamagotchis? Those digital pocket pets of the 1990s? These codes also require continual care and nourishment, except you need a negative coronavirus test every one to three days to feed this beast.</p> <p>Also, if your Tamagotchi dies of neglect, you can restart the game. If you mess up your coronavirus code, you can't enter a shop or public building and might be shipped off to quarantine.</p> <p>These QR codes were introduced in the early pandemic days for contact tracing, but with many cities instituting continuous testing, they're becoming a more intrusive part of life. With the devastation of Shanghai's total lockdown in mind, officials hope that constant tests will help them catch outbreaks early.</p> <p>In China's capital, Beijing, a new term has been coined, tanchuang, or "pop-up window," in reference to the app's pop-up warning when you lose your precious green code status. Those who are "pop-up windowed" — the noun does double duty as a verb — are locked out of offices, supermarkets, taxis, buses and any other public spaces until they can clear their status.</p> <p>"If you skip one day, then you have a pop-up window problem," says Erin Chen, 32, who works in Beijing's Chaoyang district, where daily coronavirus testing became a requirement this month amid an outbreak.</p> <p>There are different levels of tanchuang. If you missed only a coronavirus test, you can remedy your situation in as little as a day by taking a free test at one of the sidewalk stands located every few blocks across Beijing.</p> <p>But if you unwittingly wander through a part of town designated as a covid hot zone, then you must stay home until a worker comes to test you and you are cleared — which could take days.</p> <p>"Stay in place, and wait for a notice for coronavirus testing," the text message says. "Thank you for your understanding about this inconvenience to you."</p> <p>The unluckiest souls are deemed close contacts of a covid patient, and they are assigned to quarantine centers. On Saturday, about 5,000 residents of one Beijing housing complex were taken for seven days of quarantine, after 26 cases were found in their community, according to state media.</p> <p>Authorities have published intricate flow charts to try to elucidate the various routes to tanchuang. But hot zones are declared retroactively, making it impossible to guarantee a safe outing, no matter how hard one</p>

studies the charts. The lack of clarity is a feature not a bug: It's an incentive for everyone to, well, just stay home.

It results in an uncommon degree of reflection before venturing across town for a meeting or to see friends — what if the trip results in a downgrade to your covid code?

The unyielding rules of tanchuang have resulted in some strange experiences. One Shanghai executive, Ren Junxia, in Beijing as a tourist, found herself with a pop-up window on May 4. Her hotel refused to let her back in, saying that would put the entire hotel under lockdown. She ended up fleeing to a remote stretch of the Great Wall.

"I became a wandering soul with nowhere to go in the imperial capital," she wrote in an online post that went viral.

Ren's pop-up window disappeared on Day 5, as mysteriously as it came, filling her with joy. "My dear health code, you are normal!!!"

Beijing residents have reported being pop-up windowed while walking across the street to buy groceries and even while doing nothing in their apartments.

Beijing, Shanghai and other major cities appear to be following the model of Shenzhen, China's southern high-tech hub, which has managed to stave off further outbreaks through continuous coronavirus testing of its 17.6 million people after a week-long lockdown in March.

Although Shenzhen is down to zero daily coronavirus cases, all public spaces still require a negative test within 72 hours, with some venues setting a shorter 48-hour window. In the evenings, long lines at testing centers snake across the city.

Klaus Zenkel, the European Union Chamber of Commerce's South China chair and a Shenzhen resident, said that while wait times are short at some test sites, they can exceed half an hour at others.

"This testing is taking away a lot of time of the people," he said.

According to estimates by China's Soochow Securities, these tests cost 50 cents to \$1.19 per test, which means the expenditures could reach as high as 1.27 percent of China's nominal gross domestic product if 48-hour testing becomes standardized across major cities.

China's financial capital, Shanghai, did not require continuous testing before it went into a [traumatic two-month lockdown](#) in March. As it begins to emerge, Shanghai has announced plans for "normalized" citywide coronavirus testing, with an aim of having a site within a 15-minute walk from anywhere in the city.

The arrival of a digital code guarding access to public life conjures up a previous project, China's social credit system. Begun in 2014, the social credit system sparked considerable debate due to fears that it would use "big data" to rate individuals, potentially affecting what they could do and where they could go — reminiscent of a [particularly famous episode of the television serial "Black Mirror."](#)

Jeremy Daum, a senior fellow at Yale Law School's Paul Tsai China Center in Beijing, said the social credit system was widely misunderstood and has ended up in practice to be largely a regulatory mechanism for businesses. As for the health codes, he said they differ from social credit in their narrow focus on coronavirus health data.

"This is looking at a specific data set of your test results and where you're located, it seems like," Daum said. "The difference is that people imagine the social credit system as analyzing all aspects of your life."

Still, some residents worry the health codes might endure as a social gatekeeper.

	<p>On Monday, Tsinghua University law professor Lao Dongyan wrote on social media platform Weibo that she was concerned about Beijing's announcement that public buses would require health code check-ins.</p> <p>"This also means the health code may accompany us permanently in our lives, controlling our freedom of movement at any time," she wrote. "I am very concerned about this, because such measures have major hidden dangers."</p> <p>Authorities have said the continuous testing program is temporary, but they have not given a timeline for when coronavirus vaccination levels will be high enough to lift controls. While many of the test sites in Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen are pop-up tents, others are more permanent structures that suggest residents may be in for a long haul.</p> <p>One Shanghai resident, a 24-year-old woman surnamed Liu who declined to give her full name to discuss local regulations, said a sturdy testing booth was just constructed outside her housing complex, equipped with air-conditioning.</p> <p>"In the future, this 48-hour PCR requirement basically means you need to test every day," she said. "If you have a gap, your code will turn gray and you can't go anywhere."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 Military aid for Ukraine accelerates
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/05/23/ukraine-security-assistance/
GIST	<p>The Pentagon announced Monday that about 20 countries have pledged new security assistance packages for Ukraine, including new anti-ship missiles, additional attack helicopters and tanks.</p> <p>Forty-seven nations now have joined the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, which was organized by the Pentagon to help address Kyiv's immediate and long-term needs as it seeks to beat back the Russian military's protracted invasion.</p> <p>Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Monday singled out Denmark for providing Ukraine with a Harpoon launcher and missiles to help defend its coast, and the Czech Republic for agreeing to send helicopters, tanks and rocket systems. Other participating nations, he said, have donated artillery rounds and armored vehicles, or agreed to provide the Ukrainians with training and assistance to maintain its military systems.</p> <p>The group is scheduled to meet again June 15, on the sidelines of a meeting of NATO defense ministers.</p> <p>In the last several months, the United States has sharply increased its presence in Europe, expanding from 78,000 troops in the fall to 102,000 now, said Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley, appearing alongside Austin.</p> <p>There are over 15,000 U.S. sailors positioned in the Mediterranean and Baltic Seas on 24 surface combatant vessels and four submarines, a significant uptick from the six surface combatants there last fall, he said. There are 12 fighter squadrons and two combat aviation brigades in the region as well.</p> <p>President Biden ordered the removal of U.S. troops from Ukraine before Russia's invasion in late February. He has said repeatedly that the United States would not directly participate in the war, though U.S. troops continue to train Ukrainian forces elsewhere in Europe.</p> <p>Milley addressed a report published Sunday by the Wall Street Journal indicating that the Pentagon was drafting plans to provide Special Forces troops to help defend the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv. The proposal, he said, was still "at a relatively low level" in the Defense Department and had not yet been briefed to senior officials.</p>

	<p>“At the end of the day a reintroduction of U.S. forces into Ukraine would require a presidential decision, so we’re a ways away from anything like that,” Milley said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 Judge denies class action CHOP lawsuit
SOURCE	https://www.capitolhillseattle.com/2022/05/judge-denies-class-action-in-chop-deliberate-indifference-lawsuit-against-city/
GIST	<p>A legal bid that could have added hundreds of Capitol Hill residents and businesses to the federal lawsuit against the City of Seattle over “deliberate indifference” in its response to the CHOP occupied protest zone in the summer of 2020 has been denied.</p> <p>Meanwhile, a handful of Pike/Pine and 12th Ave small businesses that had been part of the suit have dropped out as it continues into its third year of litigation seeking damages from the city over the protest zone.</p> <p>In a ruling earlier this month, a U.S. District Court judge denied the effort at class certification in the CHOP lawsuit, rejecting arguments from plaintiffs that people living and doing business in a 16-block area near the unrest amid dangerous clashes between campers, demonstrators, and police in the protest zone should be eligible to join the potentially multi-million dollar suit.</p> <p>Judge Thomas Zilly ruled the lawsuit does not meet the requirements for a class action because of the specific damages to each plaintiff.</p> <p>“Plaintiffs in this case claim they were subject to diverse harms (violence, vandalism, harassment, blocked streets and sidewalks, excessive noise, and reduced business revenue) caused by the City’s actions, or inaction, in relation to CHOP,” Zilly writes, noting that cases of class action precedent include plaintiffs alleging the same “unlawful harm” like “mass arrest without probable cause,” for example.</p> <p>Former Mayor Jenny Durkan’s missing text messages from the period continue to loom in the background of the case.</p> <p>Lawyers for the mix of Capitol Hill real estate developers, property owners, and small businesses argued that revelations from earlier this year around missing texts from city leaders including then SPD Chief Carmen Best, Seattle Fire Chief Harold Scoggins, and Durkan justify class action status in the lawsuit given potential damages to a wide swath of Seattle citizens.</p> <p>Zilly said he agreed that the allegations around the texts “are certainly troubling, and will no doubt be the subject of future motion practice,” citing details from the plaintiffs about the flimsy excuse for the missing messages — they mayor’s phone was allegedly dropped into water:</p> <p><i>When Plaintiffs spoke with City technicians who were involved in managing the Mayor’s phone, the technicians indicated that Mayor Durkan never informed them that she dropped her phone into the water. The technicians also indicated that they could have recovered her text messages had Mayor Durkan informed them of the issue at or near the time that the text messages went missing.</i></p> <p>But Zilly disagreed that the issue qualified the CHOP lawsuit for class action status.</p> <p>The summer 2020 lawsuit was filed as the CHOP camp was still occupied, led by Capitol Hill-based developer Hunters Capital and a group of real estate and business plaintiffs seeking to be determined financial damages for a group of businesses in the Pike/Pine and 12th Ave areas around the camp and protest zone. The list of plaintiffs grew to including developers Hunters Capital, Redside Partners and Madrona Real Estate, businesses Cafe Argento, Northwest Liquor, Bergman’s Lock and Key, Car Tender, Tattoos and Fortune, Sage Physical Therapy, Richmark Label, and property owners including Onyx Homeowners Association as well as a handful of individual residents. After CHOP’s clearance, E Pine’s Rancho Bravo, 12th and Pike’s Sway and Cake boutique, and Nagle’s Cure cocktail bar joined the roster.</p>

Now in its third year of litigation, a handful of small businesses including Rancho Bravo, Sage Physical Therapy, the liquor shop, and Cafe Argentio, the 12th Ave coffee shop the New York Times [featured in its August 2020 profile](#) on the case, have since dropped out of the lawsuit.

Others including Car Tender and Bergman's Lock and Key have moved from the neighborhood or gone out of business.

Both the city and the plaintiffs have agreed to seal many documents in the case due to concerns about confidentiality around information around financial losses and building rents included in the arguments. The city's response to fight the effort to certify the class action has also been sealed over confidentiality concerns. It's not known how large a pool of damage and financial losses is being alleged.

The remaining plaintiffs including Hunters Capital and the other real estate concerns plus businesses Richmark Label, Sway and Cake, and Cure, since moved to 15th and Pine, must now decide how to proceed in the case.

The protest zone [formed in early June 2020](#) around the evacuation of police from the **East Precinct** building and the barriers at 12th and Pine and in Cal Anderson amid ongoing Black Lives Matter protests and marches. The early events were [recognized as a center of protest and also for art and community](#) even as there were reports of open-carry enthusiasts joining the crowds and a regular presence of armed sentries posted around the area as part of camp security.

The city [worked out a new layout plan with protesters](#) to better open the area to traffic and emergency vehicles but there was growing unease about Seattle Police's [limited presence](#) in the zone around 11th and Pine and Cal Anderson Park. For weeks, Seattle Police refused to respond to calls in the volatile area and reports of property damage, graffiti, and theft in the area exploded.

The presence of armed campers and security volunteers and the shooting deaths of two teenagers eventually led to [the July 1st order](#) for police to raid and sweep the protest zone and clear the camp.

In the lawsuit, the plaintiffs argue that the city exhibited "deliberate indifference" in its policies and response to the protests and camps on Capitol Hill, saying City Hall "acted with full knowledge that its actions would and did harm residents, business owners, and property owners."

"The City was inundated with formal and informal complaints, lawsuits, and tort claims, and the City repeatedly acknowledged that its actions caused crime and vandalism to increase in the area," the lawyers at firm **Calfio Eakes** write. "Yet the City let the situation exist for nearly a month before it finally decided to cease its support for CHOP."

Under former **City Attorney Pete Holmes**, the city's defense maintained that a case seeking damages against Seattle City Hall "require allegations that the government directly caused harm."

"Here, while City officials were unmistakably supportive of peaceful protected speech and seriously concerned about accompanying criminal activity, even had they exhibited the total nonchalance about CHOP activities which Plaintiffs' claim, "[a]ction taken by private entities with the mere approval or acquiescence of the State is not state action," Holmes wrote in 2020.

New **City Attorney Ann Davison** is now leading the city's response in the suit.

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HEADLINE	05/24 Airbnb to close in China indefinitely
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/may/24/airbnb-to-close-in-china-amid-repeated-covid-lockdowns

GIST	<p>Airbnb is closing down its business inside China indefinitely, as the country's zero-Covid policy, lockdowns and travel restrictions continue.</p> <p>On Tuesday Airbnb told its China-based users it would cease taking all bookings for accommodation and experiences in China from 30 July. The ability to book for dates beyond 29 July was suspended on Tuesday morning, according to screenshots of the Airbnb notice shared across Chinese social media. An attempt by the Guardian to make bookings from outside China after that date produced an error message.</p> <p>According to a source familiar with the decision, who confirmed the shutdown, Airbnb's domestic business in China is suffering under China's pandemic restrictions, with no indication that authorities intend to move towards co-existence with the virus or opening its borders.</p> <p>As a wave of Omicron cases has spread across China, the government has doubled down on its policy of eliminating Covid-19. Major cities including Shanghai and Beijing have been subjected to city-wide or localised lockdowns, and there are widespread travel restrictions between cities and provinces.</p> <p>The accommodation provider has operated inside China since 2016 with domestic listings across the country. In that time about 25 million guests have made bookings, according to the company, but it is costly and complex to operate and faces strong local competition. The revenue from China-based stays account for approximately 1% of global takings, the source told the Guardian, and Covid-19 has worsened the issues and heightened their impact.</p> <p>Chinese media outlet, Pheonix news, reported Airbnb would maintain an office with "hundreds" of employees in Beijing.</p> <p>The company declined to comment further on the record.</p> <p>The news became a trending topic on China's Weibo social media platform on Tuesday, with many comments focusing on how little a share of the market Airbnb held, even before the pandemic.</p> <p>Chinese residents face heavy restrictions on international travel, which has affected the global tourism industry.</p> <p>Between 2010 and 2019, the number of Chinese tourists travelling overseas nearly tripled to 155 million.</p> <p>But as the rest of the world reopens, Airbnb claims it reached a record high number of bookings in the first quarter of this year, with more than 102 million bookings for accommodation and experiences. "Guests are booking more than ever before," Airbnb told shareholders in a letter. "Looking ahead, we see strong sustained pent-up demand."</p> <p>The company said trends of people booking stays away from urban areas and staying relatively close to home continued, but guests were also returning to cities and making cross-border trips.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 Iran vows to avenge killing of IRGC officer
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/23/iran-vows-to-avenge-killing-as-it-buries-revolutionary-guard-colonel
GIST	<p>An Iranian colonel shot dead in Tehran by assailants on motorcycles has been buried as officials vowed to avenge an assassination that they continue to lay at the feet of Israel.</p> <p>The murder of Col Hassan Sayad Khodayari is the highest-profile killing of an Iranian official since the violent death of top Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh in November 2020 and appears to fit a pattern of assassinations that began more than a decade ago.</p>

The gruesome death of Khodayari in a car outside his home was also most likely another episode in a series of regional clashes, which have been fought on the waterways of the region, in the skies over Syria, the soil of northern Iraq and on Lebanon's border, where frequent skirmishes have raised fears of a broader flare-up.

Both Iran and [Israel](#) have been prepared to take brinkmanship on proxy battlefields to near breaking point. However, the targeted killings of influential Iranian military officers and scientists are the most visceral scenes of a dangerous shadow conflict that has resulted in up to a dozen Iranian officials being killed, many using the same modus operandi of gunmen riding motorbikes and using weapons fitted with silencers.

The Iranian president, [Ebrahim Raisi](#), on Monday called for the attackers to be caught. "I insist on the serious pursuit of the murderers by security officials, and I have no doubt that the blood of this great martyr will be avenged," he said ahead of a visit to Oman. "There is no doubt that the hand of global arrogance can be seen in this crime," he added, using a term used by Iran to describe Israel and the United States.

Iranian officials claimed to have arrested "Zionist agents" but offered no evidence.

Israeli officials offered no official comment on the latest assassination. However, the news was carried widely by Israeli press, who linked Khodayari to an alleged plot to kidnap Israeli diplomats abroad. Khodayari was a member of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force, an elite unit tasked with exporting the values of the Islamic revolution into the Arab world and beyond. He had played a central role in military activities in Iraq and Syria, in which Iran has consolidated its presence over the last decade and developed formidable political influence.

He was a close associate of [Maj Gen Qassem Suleimani](#), the Iranian security tsar assassinated in Baghdad by a US airstrike in January 2020. Suleimani's death sparked a barrage of Iranian ballistic missiles on then US airbases in Iraq. Iran also fired ballistic missiles earlier this year at a manor near the northern Iraqi city of Erbil, which it claimed had housed Israelis who had used it to launch deadly drone attacks inside Iran.

Tit-for-tat attacks have also taken place on the high seas, where dozens of merchant ships linked to both countries have been attacked with mines or by drones.

Negotiations between Iran, the US and Europe to kickstart a stalled 2015 nuclear deal have stagnated since March. Iran had insisted that the Revolutionary Guards be removed from a US terrorism list, but the suggestion has led to fierce opposition from US allies in the region.

Central to the deal has been whether Iran intended to use its atomic technology to make nuclear weapons. Tehran has long denied having such intentions, but Israel and the Donald Trump administration claimed otherwise. Trump tore up the deal, leaving Iran to renege on commitments it had given to Obama-era officials. Israel has launched repeated attacks on Iran's nuclear sites in the past four years.

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HEADLINE	05/23 Study: Covid's toll on range of body organs
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/may/23/covid-can-cause-ongoing-damage-to-heart-lungs-and-kidneys-study-finds
GIST	<p>Damage to the body's organs including the lungs and kidneys is common in people who were admitted to hospital with Covid, with one in eight found to have heart inflammation, researchers have revealed.</p> <p>As the pandemic evolved, it became clear that some people who had Covid were being left with ongoing symptoms – a condition that has been called long Covid.</p>

[Previous studies](#) have revealed that fewer than a third of patients who have ongoing Covid symptoms after being hospitalised with the disease feel fully recovered a year later, while some experts have warned long Covid could result in a [generation affected by disability](#).

Now researchers tracking the progress of patients who were treated in hospital for Covid say they have found evidence the disease can take a toll on a range of organs.

What's more, they say the severity of ongoing symptoms appears to be linked to the severity of the Covid infection itself.

"Even fit, healthy individuals can suffer severe Covid-19 illness and to avoid this, members of the public should take up the offer of vaccination," said Prof Colin Berry, of the University of Glasgow, which led the CISCO-19 (Cardiac imaging in Sars coronavirus disease-19) study.

"Our study provides objective evidence of abnormalities at one to two months post-Covid and these findings tie in with persisting symptoms at that time and the likelihood of ongoing health needs one year later," Berry added.

Writing in the journal Nature Medicine, the researchers describe how they tracked the outcomes of 159 people hospitalised with Covid between May 2020 and March 2021.

The team carried out a range of scans and blood tests at 28-60 days after the Covid patients were discharged, with patients also given questionnaires to complete. The results were compared with those from a control group of 29 people with a similar age, sex, ethnicity, and cardiovascular risk factors, who had not had Covid.

The authors write that, compared with controls, those who had been hospitalised with Covid showed several abnormalities, including in results from imaging of the heart, lungs and kidneys.

The team found about 13%, or one in eight, of those hospitalised for Covid were deemed by experts to be very likely to have myocarditis, or heart inflammation, compared with just one control participant. This led to a "lower health-related quality of life, greater illness perception, higher levels of anxiety and depression [and] lower levels of physical activity," said Dr Andrew Morrow, also from the University of Glasgow.

The likelihood of myocarditis was higher among healthcare workers and those with acute kidney injury, as well as those with more severe disease requiring invasive ventilation.

"These findings reinforce the importance of both the vaccine programme and novel treatments that have greatly reduced the number of severe cases of Covid-19," said Morrow.

The results also reveal those who had been hospitalised with Covid were more likely to need outpatient secondary care or be referred for symptoms consistent with long Covid, with death and re-hospitalisations also much higher in this group.

Dr Betty Raman, a cardiologist and long Covid expert at the University of Oxford who was not involved in the work, said the study provided important insights into the prevalence of clinically adjudicated myocarditis and its association with prolonged symptoms in those hospitalised with Covid early in the pandemic.

However, Raman noted that presence of persistent heart inflammation was not assessed during later follow-up, few participants had received a Covid jab, and the Covid variants involved were unlikely to be the Omicron lineages that are prevalent today.

	“Current-day estimates of myocarditis following more novel Sars-CoV-2 variants in the post-vaccine era may differ from this study, given the lower risk of hospitalisation and severe disease attributable to differences in variants and vaccine effects,” she said.
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HEADLINE	05/23 Ukraine forces sink Russia river crossings
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraines-forces-sink-russian-river-crossings-inflicting-heavy-damage-11653301800?mod=hp_lead_pos6
GIST	<p>Bridging a river under enemy fire is one of the toughest tasks any land force can face. Russia is offering the world lessons in how not to do it, say Western combat veterans.</p> <p>Since launching its large-scale invasion of Ukraine three months ago, Russia has sought to cross several rivers using temporary floating bridges so its troops could advance. Many of the attempts went badly.</p> <p>Early in the war, Russian forces deployed pontoons to cross the Irpin River near Kyiv, seeking to seize the village of Moshchun and attack the capital. Ukrainian artillery destroyed several of the bridges, some with Russian vehicles on them. Moscow got a number of men and vehicles across to engage in heavy fighting, but not enough to seize the village, contributing to Russia’s subsequent failure to take Kyiv.</p> <p>Russian forces have recently tried repeatedly to cross the Siverskyi Donets River in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine, in one attempt losing more than 80 vehicles during intense fighting, according to open-source estimates, or roughly equivalent to a battalion tactical group.</p> <p>Western officers who have studied images of the failed crossing’s aftermath say Russian troops involved appear to have ignored their own military doctrine and combat manuals, launching a hasty attempt at a maneuver that requires careful planning, extensive resources and strict oversight.</p> <p>“All combat should be a highly orchestrated ballet of kinetic violence, humans, vehicles and aircraft...and a river crossing is one of the most complicated maneuvers,” said retired Brigadier General Peter “Duke” DeLuca, who served in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and studied the Russian military for many years. “It all has to be coordinated to be effective, and we haven’t seen the Russians do that at all in Ukraine.”</p> <p>Western military observers said Russia’s string of failed crossings—also including one over the Ingulets River—indicate problems higher in its chain of command than the battlefield level and probably indicate that senior leadership is pushing for gains that troops are unprepared to achieve.</p> <p>Russia’s Ministry of Defense didn’t respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>A river crossing in combat is in many ways similar to storming a beach, say military experts. Both are generally extremely exposed, requiring painstaking preparation, speed and a complex combination of land, water and air forces. In both maneuvers, the element of surprise is hard to maintain with more than a small force or in daytime.</p> <p>River crossings can be vital in offensive combat situations since bodies of water often form natural defenses. But because crossings entail unusual equipment, specialized forces, and can put large numbers of troops in harm’s way, they should be attempted only when absolutely necessary, say tacticians.</p> <p>“Commanders only use them when they expect a big payoff,” said retired Australian Army Major General Mick Ryan. “They are normally done where an army expects to use that route as an important axis of advance.”</p> <p>Russia’s biggest failed Siverskyi Donets crossing wasn’t only a battlefield fiasco that cost it dozens of vehicles, many bridge sections and potentially hundreds of troops—probably including personnel skilled in military engineering and the deployment of specialized equipment, say analysts. The debacle also might</p>

have closed off for Russia an avenue of attack on Ukrainian forces in the area, limiting Moscow's options in a region it very much wants to control.

The failure and others "have proven how difficult it is to encircle the Ukrainians in the Donbas," said a North Atlantic Treaty Organization official.

River-crossing operations consist of at least six steps starting with reconnaissance and site selection that can begin days before a bridging. Tony Spamer, a retired British Regimental Sergeant Major who served as a commando engineer, said that when he was involved in bridge crossings during four tours of duty in Afghanistan, his units would conduct up to seven slow-speed rehearsals at their base and then practice at speed, each time shaving minutes off the dangerous operations before deploying for action.

"We'd have never rolled up to a site and tried to give it a go," as the Russians appear to have done, he said.

Reconnaissance units try to select several crossing sites so defenders are spread thin and an attack on one doesn't imperil the other, say engineers. Even if only one site is deemed possible, troops should pretend to work on other crossings to draw defenders away from the real one. The actual crossing should be constructed at night, where possible. If not, troops should create a smokescreen with fires, artillery or other charges around all their sites.

Russian forces used smoke as they prepared to cross the Siverskyi Donets, according to a Twitter thread by a person identified as Maxim, claiming to be a Ukrainian military engineer and explosives expert involved in the attack. But the Russian forces only bridged at one location—which Ukrainians appear to have already identified as a likely crossing point and targeted—without using deceptions.

"If you're smoking a spot and you've only got one site, you're not hiding anything," said Gen. DeLuca.

Before specialists begin floating pontoon-bridge sections into place, commandos or infantry forces should attempt to secure up to half a mile on the river's far bank, veterans say. They should coordinate with artillery or air support to suppress defenders' artillery and ensure they can't get clear views on the crossing zone. Infantry in boats may secure the river itself.

Clearing the far bank is vital not just to stop defenders from attacking the bridge but to ensure that troops crossing the river can quickly exit the area and make room for followers, avoiding congestion that would create a big target.

"Commanders need a clear plan for what happens after the crossing," said Gen. Ryan. "It isn't about sitting around drinking tea thinking, 'Good job on that crossing'."

Similarly, troops waiting to cross should be hidden a distance away in dispersed holding areas and gradually advance to preset staging points before racing across the bridge. All along, military police and engineers must direct the flow and be ready for the unexpected, like accidents or vehicles getting stuck on a bridge. Decisions such as whether to repair a stopped vehicle, push it forward or shove it off the bridge must be made on the fly.

"It's like trying to run the New York Thanksgiving Day parade with people coming from all different directions, down one narrow space and dispersing again, all without traffic jams," said Gen. DeLuca.

On the Siverskyi Donets, Russian forces appear not to have secured the far bank, say Western officers, based on the vehicles destroyed there. The Russians also deployed two bridges very close to each other, allowing artillery shells to damage both simultaneously.

"It doesn't seem the engineers were being looked after at all," said Maj. Spamer.

	<p>Western observers say the Russian forces' mistakes are particularly surprising because the crossing was attempted on Ukrainian territory, presumably very familiar to the defenders. Such a situation requires extra planning and caution, say veterans.</p> <p>"It wasn't a stupid thing to try," said Gen. DeLuca of Russia's Siverskyi Donets operation. "It was stupid not to do it using a deliberate river crossing."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 Smallpox vaccine enters wider production
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/smallpox-vaccine-enters-wider-production-amid-monkeypox-outbreak-11653329895?mod=hp_lead_pos7
GIST	<p>Danish vaccine maker Bavarian Nordic A/S is making more of a smallpox vaccine typically stockpiled in case of biological warfare, as governments seek doses that also offer protection against monkeypox amid an unusual outbreak around the world.</p> <p>Monkeypox, a viral illness that is only rarely detected outside of Africa, has been reported in recent weeks in at least 17 countries including the U.S., U.K., Spain, Portugal and Australia, according to nonprofit data platform Global.health. In the U.S., a case was confirmed in Massachusetts and at least five more are suspected—one each in Florida, New York and Washington and two in Utah, state officials and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Monday.</p> <p>There is no vaccine directed specifically against monkeypox. But smallpox vaccines like Bavarian Nordic's shot, known as Jynneos in the U.S., have been shown in studies to be at least 85% at preventing monkeypox, which is closely related to smallpox but much less severe.</p> <p>Paul Chaplin, chief executive officer of Bavarian Nordic, said the company had received calls from dozens of countries inquiring about doses of the vaccine. He said stocks are currently limited but that the company will make more doses in the coming weeks and months.</p> <p>"We feel confident based on discussions that we'll be able to meet the demand in a relatively short period of time," he said.</p> <p>Jynneos, which is known as Imvanex in Europe and Imvamune in Canada, was developed as a safer alternative to older smallpox vaccines. The Food and Drug Administration approved Jynneos for smallpox and monkeypox in 2019.</p> <p>Smallpox vaccination uses a live version of a related virus, called vaccinia. Older smallpox vaccines used a form of the vaccinia that could replicate, creating the risk of infection from the vaccine itself. Those vaccines are particularly risky for people with weakened immune systems such as older people or people with HIV. Bavarian Nordic's shot uses a non-replicating version of the vaccinia virus that doesn't pose that risk.</p> <p>Jynneos is also easier to administer. It is given by a standard injection, whereas older vaccines require an unusual technique that involves puncturing the skin several times.</p> <p>The U.S. and Canada are the only two countries that have built up meaningful stockpiles of Jynneos, Mr. Chaplin said. President Biden said Sunday that the public should be concerned about the recent spate of cases of monkeypox around the world. His national security adviser Jake Sullivan, said the U. S.—which has reported a confirmed case in Massachusetts and a suspected case in Florida—has vaccines available to protect against monkeypox, if needed.</p> <p>Mass vaccination is unlikely to be required because monkeypox isn't easily passed from one person to another. But it can be spread from person to person through close contact. The CDC has said the U.S. has access to enough doses of smallpox vaccine—in a stockpile that includes older vaccines too—to inoculate the entire population against smallpox in the event of a biological attack.</p>

Only the Jynneos shot is also authorized for monkeypox. The U.S., which has purchased doses mainly for use in its strategic defense stockpile, has access to 1.4 million doses from an order placed in 2020, according to Mr. Chaplin. Due to the sporadic nature of orders, Bavarian Nordic doesn't typically produce the shot continuously but rather makes doses to order at a plant north of Copenhagen.

Mr. Chaplin said immediate demand from governments around the world could be met with stocks that Bavarian Nordic has in storage, which he expects to send out over coming days. Those doses, he said, were surplus stock from earlier production runs. He didn't specify how many doses were already available.

The current outbreak is unusual because it is rare for large numbers of cases to occur outside the Western and Central African regions where monkeypox is endemic. When cases do occur elsewhere, they are usually in a person who has traveled from the affected region.

Cases have mostly, but not exclusively, been identified among men who have sex with men, according to the World Health Organization, leading experts to believe that the virus has somehow taken hold among a close-knit community. It isn't sexually transmitted but does require close contact to spread.

"My feeling is this is an outbreak that's happened because, presumably, there was a travel-associated case and then it got into a sexual network and it's a sexual network where there's the possibility for a lot of close contact," said Jake Dunning, senior researcher in emerging and high consequence infections at the Epidemic Diseases Research Group at the University of Oxford.

In Madrid, which has so far reported 34 confirmed cases, authorities are investigating possible links between a recent Gay Pride event in the Canary Islands that attracted some 80,000 attendees and cases at a sauna in the Spanish capital, according to the city's senior health official Enrique Ruiz Escudero.

If demand continues, Bavarian plans to extend a production run that is already under way for a recent order from the Canadian government that predated the monkeypox outbreak. The plant has the capacity to make up to 30 million doses of the shot a year, although the company would need to scale back production of other vaccines to do so, he said. Bavarian Nordic also makes vaccines for rabies, tick-borne encephalitis and Ebola.

Governments haven't disclosed how they will use smallpox vaccination to curb the monkeypox outbreak. Infectious-disease experts say the strategy would most likely involve offering the shot to people at highest risk of catching the disease, such as close contacts of confirmed cases and healthcare workers who are treating monkeypox patients. That approach has been used by the U.K. government in previous, smaller, monkeypox outbreaks, according to Dr. Dunning.

Smallpox vaccination can prevent the onset of monkeypox if given within four days of exposure, according to the CDC. Given within 14 days of exposure, it may still reduce symptoms of the disease.

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HEADLINE	05/23 Egypt bread crisis awakens old fears
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/egypts-bread-crisis-wheat-supplies-russia-ukrain-warawakens-old-fears-of-political-unrest-11653318765?mod=hp_lead_pos5
GIST	<p>CAIRO—For decades, vendors sold subsidized Egyptian baladi bread for almost nothing in Al-Sayeda Zeinab market, a bustling hub for this city's working class. One day last month, there was suddenly no baladi.</p> <p>Customers started shouting at Khalil Mohamed, a municipal bakery-shop worker. "You should have seen the fight," said Mr. Mohamed, 25 years old. "It was like a hunger crisis."</p>

Long the world's top importer of wheat, Egypt has been hammered by [Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has disrupted wheat supplies from both countries](#). The pair previously supplied more than 80% of Egypt's imports.

In a country where political discontent often follows spikes in food prices, the potential for bread shortages is among the most urgent security challenges the Egyptian state has faced [since the 2013 coup](#) that installed President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi in power.

As a result, the government has cast a global net for new wheat supplies from Paraguay to India. It is also directing the country's farmers to harvest wheat earlier than usual this year and aims to buy 57% more grain locally than the previous year, according to a Wall Street Journal calculation based on official data.

Egypt has sought billions of dollars in loans and investments from neighboring governments and the International Monetary Fund to help pay for social services like the subsidized bread program that provides baladi and other staples nearly free to 72 million Egyptians, out of a total population of 103 million.

Authorities have capped prices that shops can charge for unsubsidized baladi, a ubiquitous wheat-based pita, as well as for fino bread, a long baguette-shaped roll that is the other popular staple for working-class Egyptians.

The measures have squeezed the open-air markets where many Cairenes shop for basics. Bread sellers say bakeries are charging higher prices, which the government doesn't allow them to fully pass along to customers. Bakeries are paying more for flour and sugar and sometimes producing less, leading to sporadic shortages.

"We're under a lot of pressure," said Mahmoud Mamdouh, 35, who sells cookies decorated with jam and powdered sugar in the same market, as well as unsubsidized fino bread.

Mr. Mamdouh said he is worried that he won't be able to sell all the cookies he has already made. He is especially frustrated with officials from the government's Ministry of Supply and Internal Trade visiting his shop to enforce price restrictions on fino. Before the Eid holiday at the beginning of May, they hung up a sign showing prices per loaf next to his shop entrance.

A few blocks away, Sobhy Mohamed, 40, a baladi seller, is also critical of the government: "I'm fine with them curbing prices, but they should subsidize us."

At the end of the day, shop owners close their doors with less cash in their pockets. No one dares to protest. Organized dissent is rare since President Sisi has clamped down on public speech for almost a decade, throwing dissidents and journalists in jail.

Egyptian government officials didn't respond to attempts to seek comment.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, governments from Turkey to Indonesia, Somalia to Lebanon, have scrambled to find new supplies and cope with rising prices. But the stakes are especially high for Egypt, the most populous country in the Middle East, where the economy was in a precarious position before the war started.

In March, the country's central bank allowed the Egyptian pound to devalue by 14% against the U.S. dollar to pave the way for discussions with the IMF for a new loan. The bank has already taken \$5 billion from Saudi Arabia, a longtime patron of Mr. Sisi, to bolster its currency reserves. Authorities also raised interest rates by 2 percentage points Thursday to try to tackle the highest inflation in almost three years.

"The government is very worried," said Mohammed Soliman, an Egypt scholar at the Middle East Institute in Washington, D.C. "They're in firefighting mode."

Bread, which Egyptians call A'ish—Arabic for life—is part of a social contract in Egypt with the government providing affordable food, gasoline and electricity. Egyptians eat more bread than most people in the world, around 330 pounds a year each on average, nearly triple the global figure.

Bread-price increases would sting in a country where about 30% of people live on less than \$2 a day, according to Egypt's official statistics. Unsubsidized baladi loaves now cost about 7 cents each, while subsidized loaves are less than 1 cent.

Egyptian authorities have intervened in wheat markets as far back as the early 19th century, when an Ottoman ruler launched a program to collect wheat from local farmers for the military. In the 1950s, then-President Gamal Abdel Nasser directed several agencies to fix the price of bread, creating a bureaucracy to support price controls.

Mr. Nasser's successor, President Anwar Sadat, tried to cut down on subsidies for food including certain types of bread in the late 1970s, but protests erupted for two days in major cities, leaving dozens of people dead. Mr. Sadat quickly scratched his plan.

In 2011, bread prices became an issue again. One man set himself on fire because government policies barred him from buying subsidized bread. Combined with other sources of discontent such as police brutality, government corruption, poverty and unemployment, the soaring cost of bread helped topple President Hosni Mubarak in a series of uprisings across the region known as the Arab Spring.

For the Egyptian government, the cost of ensuring cheap bread and other foods has risen dramatically in recent years. The bill is estimated at 90 billion Egyptian pounds (\$4.9 billion) for fiscal year 2023, compared with 87 billion the previous year, according to official statistics.

Authorities in April secured 350,000 tons of wheat from France, Bulgaria and Russia, and say more shipments will come from India, even though the country's crops are suffering a heat wave.

About 300,000 tons of Ukrainian wheat that was supposed to arrive at Egyptian ports are still stuck in Ukraine, according to commodities traders. Egypt's supply minister, Ali Moselhy, told a press conference Tuesday that Ukraine suggested sending four delayed cargoes by rail through Poland.

Since Mr. Sisi took power, he has sought to shore up the economic engine that underpins bread subsidies, turning Egypt into a natural-gas exporter and investing heavily in infrastructure and transportation. As part of conditions required to receive billions of dollars from the International Monetary Fund since 2016, he has rolled back some energy and food subsidies but left the bread program untouched. It has been challenging for authorities to make changes other than reducing the size of loaves.

Egypt has few easy answers for getting more wheat. About 98% of Egypt is desert and it has worsening problems with access to water. Authorities have resisted calls to switch to grains such as sorghum or barley that require less water because of wheat's overwhelming popularity.

Though the country has one of the world's great water resources in the Nile River, its rights to it are limited under a 1959 water-sharing agreement with neighboring Sudan.

In late April, Mr. Sisi inspected a swath of farm land in southwest Egypt to mark the start of the local wheat harvest. The region, Toshka, lies in a natural depression and is part of a stop-and-go 1990s initiative that Mr. Sisi has revived to try to reclaim hundreds of thousands of acres for farming.

The goal is to reduce the proportion of Egypt's wheat that is imported to 25%, compared with about 62% now.

In a ramshackle neighborhood in northern Cairo, Attia Hamad, head of bakeries at the government's Cairo Chamber of Commerce, has been especially busy in recent weeks, making sure that prices don't get out of

control at each step of the way for producing bread—from the wheat flour that gets sold to bakeries, to the baked goods that gets sold to stalls and customers.

He said the government will keep in place price caps on unsubsidized bread as long as necessary, as well as retain subsidized bread prices at current price levels of less than one U.S. cent a loaf.

Authorities could disqualify about 20 million people from the food-subsidy card system that is required for receiving subsidized bread, he said.

The Supply Ministry is checking its databases to make sure recipients meet its criteria, from having a salary under 2500 Egyptian pounds (\$135) a month, to not owning a car and not having children enrolled in expensive international schools, according to Mr. Hamad.

As recently as last year, Mr. Sisi floated the idea of raising the price of subsidized bread. “I cannot provide 20 loaves of bread at the cost of one cigarette,” he said last August, marking the first time an Egyptian leader brought up the possibility of such an increase since the 1977 bread riots.

On social media, Egyptians erupted in protest with even supporters of Mr. Sisi saying bread was a red line not to be touched. One member of parliament, Freddy Al-Bayadi, issued an open letter to Mr. Sisi, asking him to reconsider.

“The loaf isn’t just food but a national-security matter,” Mr. Al-Bayadi wrote. “It’s the main meal and maybe the only one for millions of citizens.”

This year, Mr. Sisi has said nothing to the public about his plans for subsidized bread.

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HEADLINE	05/23 Blood platelet shortage critical levels
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3484241/blood-platelet-shortage-impacting-medical-treatments-amid-lack-of-donors/
GIST	<p>Ongoing since the pandemic, a blood platelet shortage is reaching critical levels as deliveries are being rationed among local hospitals.</p> <p>Bloodworks Northwest, a blood bank and medical research institute headquartered in Seattle, is unable to send full orders of platelets to cancer and surgery centers because there are not enough donors. The medical laboratory stated it was running dangerously low on Type O positive, O negative, and platelet donations.</p> <p>Platelets help form blood clots, and Dr. Sandyha Panch at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center says if the shortage lasts, it may force changes in cancer treatments.</p> <p>“Right now, we’re giving half units to patients, and maybe saving the full units of platelets for people who are bleeding actively,” Panch said.</p> <p>The platelet rationing could also lead to delays in elective surgery at local hospitals.</p> <p>As blood banks across western Washington continue to deal with an ongoing shortage of blood, Kent’s mayor, Dana Ralph, is calling for more donations.</p> <p>“It’s very concerning. We don’t know when the next person is going to be sick or there’s going to be some sort of tragic accident,” Ralph said. “Those are the things we can’t schedule out, so we have to make sure the supply exists for when those things happen.”</p> <p>Ralph, a cancer survivor, used her platform and her donation to highlight the need to have enough blood on hand, especially during emergencies.</p>

	<p>Bloodworks Northwest joined 30 other blood centers across the country to organize the Blood Emergency Readiness Corps. It is a first-in-the-nation partnership to ensure the local blood supply is consistent.</p> <p>The collective is committed to preparing for mass transfusion disasters by collecting extra units for an emergency reserve.</p> <p>Most recently, the Blood Emergency Readiness Corps sent reserves of blood to Kentucky after tornados struck in December 2021. The organization also shipped boxes of red blood cells for trauma care to the eight remaining victims of a school shooting in Michigan in December 2021.</p> <p>The regional blood supply is hovering around a one- to two-day limit, according to Bloodworks Northwest. Washington and Oregon need approximately 1,000 donors daily to maintain a safe supply.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 King Co. homeless numbers rise 14%
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3483956/kcrha-point-in-time-homeless-count-2022/
GIST	<p>The number of homeless individuals has grown 13.8% over the last two years, according to King County Regional Homeless Authority's Point in Time (PIT) Count, while the percentage of sheltered homeless dropped 10%.</p> <p>In 2020, the percentage of homeless who had access to shelter on a consistent basis was 53% compared to those unsheltered at 47%. Two years later, the amount of homeless with shelter is just 43%.</p> <p>PIT Count is an estimate of people experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness on a single night in King County. The main count of people living unsheltered is conducted by approximately 600 volunteers spread across the county between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m., assisted by paid "guides" who have experienced homelessness in the past and whose knowledge can help locate homeless people off the beaten path.</p> <p>A separate count is conducted of homeless individuals who are sheltered: in emergency shelters, sanctioned encampments, "tiny home" villages, transitional housing, and other forms of temporary shelter.</p> <p>This data is widely understood to be an undercount.</p> <p>The recent King County Department of Community and Human Services Cross Systems Homelessness Analysis found that at least 40,871 people experienced homelessness at some point in 2020.</p> <p>Based on the PIT Count, 25% of people experiencing homelessness in King County identify as Black, while, according to the 2020 U.S. Census, only 7% of King County's population identifies as Black. Similarly, 9% of people experiencing homelessness identify as American Indian, Alaskan Native, or Indigenous, but that group makes up only 1% of King County's population.</p> <p>51% identified with having a disability, while 31% identified with having a mental health disorder. 37% reported they are suffering from a substance abuse problem.</p> <p>The release of this data came with a decision to pivot from the organization's original plan to scrap the count. In November 2021, the Regional Homeless Authority (RHA) announced it was not planning on releasing a PIT Count for 2022.</p> <p>"Because of the methodology, the PIT is widely understood to be an undercount, which can be harmful in skewing the narrative and limiting the budget and resources dedicated to solutions," the RHA wrote in a statement. "Instead, we will conduct qualitative engagement with people living unsheltered to learn more about their experiences and how we can better meet their needs."</p>

	<p>The PIT Count has been a controversial strategy for accurately tracking homeless data. The 2019 PIT count showed a drop in homelessness, but SCC Insight argued there were several reasons to question the accuracy of the count and the companion survey, including fluctuating sample sizes, a sampling bias, and the reliance on inconsistent volunteers and guides.</p> <p>The 2020 PIT count faced similar issues, with terrible weather and a lack of volunteers on the night of the count marring the operation.</p> <p>The Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development requires local jurisdictions for homelessness programs to conduct an annual count of homeless people within the jurisdiction in order to receive federal funding.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 Police reform efforts stall?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/05/23/biden-george-floyd-police-reform/
GIST	<p>A few days after George Floyd was murdered, presidential hopeful Joe Biden addressed the nation, speaking passionately about police reforms that he stressed could not wait another month, let alone another election cycle: banning police chokeholds; rules for use of force; a review of every police department's hiring, training and de-escalation practices.</p> <p>"No more excuses," Biden demanded, urging Congress to put a bill on then-President Donald Trump's desk within days. "No more delays."</p> <p>Two years later, it's Biden who sits behind the presidential desk. And his emphasis often appears to be less on how quickly the nation's police departments can be reformed than on how quickly they can add officers.</p> <p>"To every governor, every mayor, every county official, the need is clear, my message is clear: ... Spend this money now that you have," Biden said in a speech from the Rose Garden earlier this month, flanked by police chiefs from across the country. "Use these funds we made available to you to prioritize public safety. Do it quickly, before the summer, when crime rates typically surge. Taking action today is going to save lives tomorrow. So use the money. Hire the police officers."</p> <p>Two years after Floyd's killing sparked demonstrations for police reform and a movement to confront systemic racism, the push to rehabilitate police departments has stagnated. A bill bearing Floyd's name aimed at overhauling police practices died in the Senate, even after Biden urged legislators to get it done in his first address to Congress. The administration has been mulling for months whether Biden should issue an executive order on police reform, leaving civil rights leaders frustrated at the delay and whether it will result in any enduring improvement.</p> <p>More deeply, those who have pushed hardest for reforms worry about what they see as an about-face on equitable policing, or at least a faltering of will, as a surge in crime creates pressure on Biden and his party to stand unwaveringly with the police.</p> <p>"We're now contending with elected officials who are now defaulting to the same narrative that we know does not offer any solutions to the issues that we face, meaning it is a lot easier to just default to the knee-jerk 'we need more police on the streets' argument," said Amara Enyia, a policy research coordinator for the Movement for Black Lives. "It's a reaction that takes absolutely no thought and that doesn't take into account what the research shows about the conditions that create safety. But it's just something that fits neatly within a campaign cycle."</p> <p>Republicans are trying to throw Democrats on the defensive by branding them as a party that stands for defunding the police and tolerating chaos and violence. Some midterm election ads have already sought to sway voters with images of violent protests, burning cities and brazen crimes.</p>

Those political winds, combined with near-universal Republican opposition to Democratic efforts at police reform, have blunted much of the momentum that arose after Floyd's death. In one stretch earlier this month — during National Police Week, when the country traditionally honors fallen officers — Biden's public appearances focused on a pro-police message on three of four days.

On May 13, he urged communities to use pandemic relief funds to bolster police departments to head off anticipated increases in crime over the summer. Two days later, he spoke at the National Peace Officers' Memorial Service on the lawn of the U.S. Capitol. Then he held a ceremony to award medals of valor to nine police officers and six firefighters in the East Room of the White House.

"Folks, the answer is not to abandon the streets," Biden said at the police officers' service. "It's not to choose between safety and equal justice. And we should agree: It's not to defund the police. It's to fund the police. Fund them with the resources, the training they need to protect our communities and themselves, and restore trust among the police and the people."

It's not that Biden has reversed himself on any specific policies, but rather that his emphasis and rhetoric have shifted.

Two years ago, Biden enthusiastically embraced the racial justice movement sparked by Floyd's killing, [speaking at Floyd's funeral](#), meeting with the murdered man's family in Houston and at the White House, and inviting Floyd's brothers [to speak at the Democratic National Convention where Biden was nominated](#).

Later, when the officer who knelt on Floyd's neck was convicted of murder, Biden vowed to Floyd's family that he would get something done on police reform in Floyd's name.

All of that helped Biden [create a contrast with then-President Donald Trump](#), who criticized what he described as "lawless" racial justice protests in Democratic-led cities, highlighted incidents of violence amid the demonstrations, and in some cases dispatched federal troops because, he said, he needed to protect federal property.

After Derek Chauvin was convicted of Floyd's murder, Vice President Harris, too, made impassioned comments. "America has a long history of systemic racism," Harris said [in a televised speech at the White House](#). "Black Americans, and Black men in particular, have been treated through the course of our history as less than human. Black men are fathers and brothers and sons and uncles and grandfathers and friends and neighbors."

But turning rhetoric into change has proved daunting, given the razor-thin Democratic majorities in Congress and an American public increasingly spooked by rising crime. In 2021, a dozen major cities, including Louisville, Philadelphia and Portland, Ore., set homicide records.

In June 2020, amid the nationwide racial justice protests, about a quarter of Americans supported cuts in police funding, according to [a Pew Research Center survey](#). By October 2021, that had fallen to 15 percent, and the drop was even starker among voters who leaned Democratic.

Biden's political pivot is a lesson in the limited powers of the presidency, said Michael Fauntroy, director of the Race, Politics and Policy Center at George Mason University. As a result of a paper-thin governing majority, Fauntroy said, Biden "is limited at this point to rhetoric and symbolism."

"As a Black man in America, I definitely want more done. But as a political scientist, and somebody who has followed this stuff throughout my career, I understand why things haven't been done," Fauntroy said. "It doesn't matter how passionate or how good an idea is — If you can't get 60 votes in the Senate and 218 in the House, then you can't do it."

The Senate is politically split 50-50, with Harris casting tiebreaking votes if necessary, and 60 votes are needed to pass most legislation through that chamber. In the House, Democrats [hold a 221-208 edge](#) with

six vacancies. Adding to Biden's challenge, as the November elections approach, fewer lawmakers are prepared to cast risky votes that could be used against them.

The White House argues that bolstering police departments is not at odds with reforming them. Former White House press secretary Jen Psaki said this month that the administration is still mulling an executive order on police reform, and had delayed in hopes that Congress would forge something more enduring.

And she said Biden's recent message that cities should use pandemic relief funds to beef up police departments reflects the need to confront gun crime across the country. "It's not just about pumping funding into police departments, it's about ensuring that there are enough cops on the beat to crack down on violent crime, to crack down on illegal guns that are the cause of 77 percent of crimes across the country," Psaki said.

Biden has acted unilaterally in some areas. His Justice Department implemented a ban on chokeholds and carotid restraints for federal officers, [began requiring agents to wear body cameras](#), and severely limited the use of so-called no-knock warrants like the one that factored into the 2020 killing of [Louisville resident Breonna Taylor](#).

Those changes do not cover the thousands of state and local police departments across the country, but the White House hopes many of those departments will use the new federal rules as a model.

In another effort to address racial justice, Biden recently pardoned three people and commuted the sentences of 75 nonviolent drug offenders, amid calls for leniency in a system that disproportionately affects people of color.

And the White House has stressed that increased police funding is part of a broader set of policies to combat gun violence and make law enforcement more equitable.

"The mass mobilization that we saw after the murder of George Floyd was not only about policing or criminal justice issues, it was about the need for racial justice," said Chiraag Bains, special assistant to the president for criminal justice. "We are seeing its impact in terms of translating that commitment to equity into policy throughout the government's work, not just in our criminal justice reform and policing."

Biden's supporters also say his balanced position reflects public opinion, since polls show that most Americans do not want widespread cuts in police budgets. An effort to dramatically reduce police funding failed in Minneapolis, the epicenter of the George Floyd protests. And the administration stresses that many of the mostly-minority communities that had some of the most passionate demonstrations are also plagued by rising crime.

But Biden's pivot in messaging has clearly angered an array of activists and leaders. Many see crime as the product of decades of divestment in America's most vulnerable neighborhoods, and they contend that the only solution is a reinvestment in people and communities, not just in the police that patrol them.

That reaction also could resonate politically. Black voters have long been one of the Democratic Party's most loyal voting blocs, and if large numbers of them come to believe Biden and his party have failed to fulfill their promises, they could stay home in November's midterms.

Angela Lang, a Milwaukee political organizer [who founded Black Leaders Organizing for Communities](#) in 2017, said voters tend to speak of the need to rebuild the resources that help their community flourish, from health care to housing.

"When we go out in the field and knock on doors, we always start the question with 'What does it look like for our community to thrive?'" Lang said. "People always talk about we need investments in mental health. We need investments into affordable housing. We constantly have a housing crisis in Milwaukee. ... And so people are talking about all the different ways they want their community to be invested in order for it to thrive. And it doesn't include more policing."

HEADLINE	05/23 NKorea: 'positive trend' battling virus
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/23/world/asia/north-korea-covid.html
GIST	<p>North Korea is boasting of “a positive trend” in fighting the country’s Covid outbreak, according to state-run Korean Central News Agency.</p> <p>While just last week the government ordered “maximum emergency” controls to battle the raging epidemic, the government on Sunday shifted its tone, claiming to have quickly reversed the trajectory of the outbreak.</p> <p>On Monday, North Korea reported 167,650 new suspected coronavirus cases and one death, a dip after the government had been reporting daily cases above 200,000 for more than a week. But it remains difficult to get a true picture of the outbreak in the country given the country’s lack of transparency.</p> <p>If the official figures are correct, it would mean more than 2.5 million people have been infected and 67 people have died from the virus, according to state officials.</p> <p>In the first two years of the pandemic, the government held firm in asserting that there had been no positive cases in the country. But this month it acknowledged the country’s first confirmed case, in April, followed by a huge surge a few weeks ago.</p> <p>During a visit by President Biden to South Korea this past weekend to meet South Korea’s new president, Yoon Suk-yeol, the leaders said their countries were “willing to work with the international community to provide assistance” to North Korea to fight the virus. North Korea has not responded to the offer.</p> <p>Meanwhile, South Korea on Monday reported its lowest case numbers in almost four months, with the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency saying there were 9,975 new daily cases. The country has fully vaccinated 86 percent of its population.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 Zelensky urges harder line on Russia
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/23/world/europe/russia-ukraine-war-zelensky.html
GIST	<p>DAVOS, Switzerland — Hoping to shore up international resolve, Ukraine’s president told global political and business leaders Monday that as far as they have gone to punish Moscow for invading Ukraine, it was not far enough.</p> <p>“This is really the moment when it is decided whether brute force will rule the world,” declared President Volodymyr Zelensky.</p> <p>The Ukrainian leader was speaking by video link to the World Economic Forum in Davos on a day when a Russian diplomat resigned with a blistering statement denouncing President Vladimir V. Putin, and when a Russian soldier became the first to be convicted by a Ukrainian court of a war crime.</p> <p>Earlier in the day, in a sign of the broader implications of the war, President Biden indirectly addressed warnings by Ukraine and its most ardent allies that failing to stand up to Russia would encourage future territorial aggression, including by China. At a news conference in Japan, Mr. Biden stated bluntly that he would use military force to defend Taiwan from China, and go much farther than he has to aid Ukraine, dropping the longstanding U.S. posture of ambiguity about such a conflict.</p> <p>When asked how the American response might differ in the event of an attack on Taiwan, Mr. Biden prefaced his answer by saying that Mr. Putin must “pay a dear price for his barbarism in Ukraine.”</p> <p>NATO and European Union countries have so far demonstrated remarkable agreement in imposing tough economic sanctions on Russia and supporting Ukraine, but some fractures have appeared. Hungary has</p>

held up an E.U. embargo on Russian oil imports, though Robert Habeck, Germany's vice chancellor and energy minister, [said Monday](#) that he was "positive that Europe will find a solution within the next days."

And while some European countries, including Poland, have insisted that any peace agreement must include complete Russian withdrawal from Ukraine, others have been pressing for a less ambitious cease-fire, leaving open the question of whether the West might acquiesce to some of Russia's territorial gains. Italy's government has put forward a cease-fire proposal that the Russian government said Monday it had received and was reviewing.

But it is unclear where the combatants stand on a deal. Russia has kept its position murky, alternately embracing and spurning negotiation, sometimes in the span of a few hours.

Earlier in the war, Ukraine's government said it would accept neutrality, dropping the idea of joining the NATO alliance — a key Russian demand and a feature of the Italian proposal — and would be willing to discuss territorial cessions under some conditions. It remains to be seen whether Russia's battlefield struggles and mounting evidence of atrocities have changed the thinking in Kyiv.

The video appearance at Davos by Mr. Zelensky — bearded, wearing a T-shirt and a grim expression — underscored the contrast to past versions of an event that has become shorthand for indulgent self-importance. Russian officials and oligarchs, who ordinarily host extravagant parties, [are banned this year](#); in their place is an exhibit on atrocities in Ukraine.

Mr. Zelensky said that sanctions should be pushed to the maximum, "so that Russia and every other potential aggressor who wants to wage a brutal war against a neighbor knows exactly what this is leading to."

He said that while the United States, the European Union and others have moved to cut off or cut back energy imports from Russia and other commerce, and have blocked Russian banks from vital international networks, the measures did not go far enough.

"Don't wait until Russia uses special weapons — chemical, biological and, God forbid, nuclear," Mr. Zelensky said. "Do not give the aggressor the impression that the world will not show enough resistance."

Many foreign businesses have suspended operations in Russia, but fewer have said they are leaving the country definitively; Starbucks joined that shorter list on Monday. Mr. Zelensky said companies should shut down completely in Russia "so that your brands are not associated with war crimes," and invited them to relocate to Ukraine.

In Ukraine, combat raged around the city of Sievierodonetsk, a key target of the Russian offensive to expand the broad swath of territory it has seized in the eastern part of the country. American-supplied heavy artillery, 155-millimeter howitzers, has [started reaching Ukrainian frontline units](#), reducing the Russian advantage in heavy weapons.

On Monday, a court in Kyiv found a Russian soldier [guilty of killing a civilian](#), and sentenced him to life in prison — the first such verdict against a Russian taken prisoner. Sgt. Vadim Shishimarin, 21, had admitted to shooting a 62-year-old man as he rode a bicycle in the Sumy region, in the early days of the war. Ukrainian officials say they have documented more than 1,000 war crimes and identified hundreds of perpetrators, most of who remain out of reach.

Mr. Zelensky said that an attack last week on a military training center in northern Ukraine [had killed 87 people](#), far more than initially estimated, making it one of the deadliest strikes since the Feb. 24 invasion began.

Russia's progress remains slow and its losses heavy. Britain's Defense Intelligence agency reported Monday that the Russian military "has likely suffered a similar death toll" in just three months of fighting

in Ukraine to the Soviet Union's losses — commonly estimated at more than 14,000 dead — in its war in Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989.

Ukrainian officials say that tens of thousands of their people, primarily civilians, have been killed. The United Nations' refugee agency said Monday that the war has forced 14 million Ukrainians — out of a prewar population of about 44 million — to flee their homes, including six million who have left the country, in Europe's biggest displacement since World War II. The war has pushed the number of displaced people worldwide to over 100 million for the first time, the agency said.

Such information does not reach most people in Russia, where independent sources of information have been forced to shut down, critics have been jailed or driven into exile, officials and Kremlin-controlled media grossly distort what is happening in Ukraine, and the government has made it a crime to criticize the war or even to call it a war or an invasion.

A few prominent Russians have spoken out, mostly from outside the country, but officials have toed the Kremlin line.

Yet on Monday, a midlevel diplomat in Russia's mission to the United Nations in Geneva resigned with a scathing public statement calling out his own country's "bloody, witless and absolutely needless ignominy," and accusing its leaders of caring only about their own power and luxuries.

"The aggressive war unleashed by Putin against Ukraine," the diplomat, Boris Bondarev wrote, is "a crime against the Ukrainian people" and against Russians, as well. He said the Foreign Ministry, where he worked for 20 years, "is all about warmongering, lies and hatred."

In an interview, he said that within the ministry, "there are people — not so few — who think as I do. But most, I think, are still in the thrall of this propaganda that they receive and that they, in part, create." He said that diplomats sent misleading reports back to Moscow, telling their superiors only what they wanted to hear.

Partly as a result, he said, the Kremlin "got Ukraine wrong, they got the West wrong, they basically got everything wrong."

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HEADLINE	05/23 Start of California's fire season?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/23/us/california-wildfire-season.html
GIST	<p>More than half a dozen wildfires broke out across California in a 48-hour span late last week, an unsettling picture of what's to come as temperatures warm and drought conditions worsen this summer.</p> <p>On Thursday afternoon, a blaze erupted in Kern County and grew to nearly 700 acres. Another in Tahoe National Forest forced the closure of a nearby highway. A brush fire north of Vacaville prompted evacuation orders Saturday in Solano County.</p> <p>As you probably know, California's fire season traditionally peaks between July and October — and it's only May. Yet weather officials are warning there could be even more dangerous fires before spring is over.</p> <p>Today and tomorrow, gusty winds, low humidity and unseasonably hot temperatures are creating high fire risk across an inland swath of California between Redding and Sacramento. "Any fires that develop will likely spread rapidly," said the National Weather Service office in Sacramento.</p> <p>The transformation of California's summer and autumn fire season into a year-round phenomenon is a story that's probably become familiar. Typically, it took months of dry, warm weather after the state's winter rains for vegetation to become parched enough to fuel massive fires. But increasingly warm</p>

temperatures and a [shorter wet season](#) are leaving the land primed for destructive fires earlier in the year.

In January, typically one of California's wettest months, a [wildfire swept through](#) Big Sur — an event the National Weather Service called “surreal.”

This month, a blaze erupted in Laguna Niguel and destroyed 20 homes, another surprise given that humid and coastal conditions typically don't allow fires to explode so quickly.

Though California saw record rainfall in the final three months of 2021, that was followed by an [unusually dry January through March](#). California went from 88 percent of its land being considered in extreme or exceptional drought down to 1 percent immediately after the heavy rains, but it is now back up to 60 percent, [according to the U.S. Drought Monitor](#).

This is worrisome if the coming summer turns out to be warmer than average, [as is expected](#). Similar conditions over the past few years have set the stage for some of the state's most destructive fire seasons. Four out of the five largest fires in modern California history occurred in the past two years, [according to CalFire](#).

Daniel Swain, a climate scientist at the University of California, Los Angeles, said that while California's coastal areas might not see extreme temperatures this summer, inland regions, including the Central Valley foothills and Sierra Nevada, could experience record or near-record heat.

“That, of course, has major implications for wildfire risk, since peak summer burning conditions usually occur precisely in those regions expected to be most anomalously hot and dry,” [Swain recently wrote](#).

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HEADLINE	05/23 Russian casualties rising in Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/23/russian-casualties-keep-rising-ukraine-top-general/
GIST	<p>Russia has paid a historic human price three months into its war in Ukraine.</p> <p>British intelligence officials estimated Monday that the Russian military has lost about 15,000 troops, roughly the same number who perished in the Soviet Union's ill-fated nine-year military campaign in Afghanistan.</p> <p>Ukrainian officials, meanwhile, claim that a dozen top Russian generals are among those killed, a staggering figure that, if true, would have crippled Russia's command-and-control structure for the invasion, depriving the Russian army of key leaders at critical moments in the conflict.</p> <p>Thousands more Russian soldiers have been wounded, according to various estimates by Ukrainian and Western military officials.</p> <p>The war's fallout has also nearly reached the highest echelons of the Kremlin, according to media reports. Maj. Gen. Kyrylo Budanov, the head of Ukraine's defense intelligence agency, said Monday that an assassination attempt was made on Russian President Vladimir Putin in the early days of the war, which began Feb. 24.</p> <p>Western officials did not independently verify those reports, but analysts said the prospect of such an attempt reflects the massive backlash that Mr. Putin and his inner circle have brought on themselves by authorizing the unprovoked invasion of neighboring Ukraine.</p> <p>According to a British Defense Ministry intelligence update, the Russian military's stunning death toll could also turn Russian public opinion against the war and lead to more high-profile protests, potentially shaking Mr. Putin's grip on power.</p>

“In the first three months of its ‘special military operation,’ Russia has likely suffered a similar death toll to that experienced by the Soviet Union during its nine-year war in Afghanistan,” the ministry said in an update posted on Twitter. “A combination of poor low-level tactics, limited air cover, a lack of flexibility, and a command approach which is prepared to reinforce failure and repeat mistakes has led to this high casualty rate, which continues to rise in the Donbas offensive.”

“The Russian public has, in the past, proven sensitive to casualties suffered during wars of choice,” the ministry wrote. “As casualties suffered in Ukraine continue to rise they will become more apparent, and public dissatisfaction with the war and a willingness to voice it may grow.”

The Kremlin’s tight control over domestic media has, to a large degree, kept much of the Russian public in the dark about the operation in Ukraine. Still, there are growing signs that anger over the war and its escalating death count is fueling discontent.

Boris Bondarev, a Russian diplomat who identifies himself on social media as an arms control and disarmament official with Russia’s mission to the United Nations office in Geneva, publicly resigned Monday and blasted his country’s leadership.

“For twenty years of my diplomatic career I have seen different turns of our foreign policy, but never have I been so ashamed of my country as on Feb. 24 of this year,” he wrote in a LinkedIn post. “The aggressive war unleashed by Putin against Ukraine, and in fact against the entire Western world, is not only a crime against the Ukrainian people, but also, perhaps, the most serious crime against the people of Russia. ... I studied to be a diplomat and have been a diplomat for twenty years. The ministry has become my home and family. But I simply cannot any longer share in this bloody, witless and absolutely needless ignominy.”

The Bondarev resignation coincided with reports that a captured Russian soldier, who pleaded guilty to killing a civilian in Ukraine, was sentenced by a Ukrainian court Monday to life in prison, the maximum. The Kremlin showed signs that it might put on trial some Ukrainian fighters who surrendered to Russian forces last week in Mariupol.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called on world leaders to ramp up economic pressure on Moscow to strengthen resistance to Mr. Putin’s war and more significant economic consequences for the Russian economy.

“This is what sanctions should be: They should be maximum so that Russia and every other potential aggressor that wants to wage a brutal war against its neighbor would clearly know the immediate consequences of their actions,” Mr. Zelenskyy said in a video message to the World Economic Forum in Davos, according to English-language media translations of his comments.

Consequences of war

Although the Russian economy has suffered from unprecedented Western sanctions and an exodus of Western businesses, the Russian military has taken arguably the most significant hit. The Russian force has reportedly lost hundreds of tanks and other armored vehicles at the hands of Ukrainian anti-tank missiles and small armed drones.

Ukrainian forces also have successfully targeted Russian warships, inflicting a demoralizing blow to a military that likely believed its enemy was incapable of such attacks.

The human cost has been perhaps the most notable. Ukrainian officials said a dozen Russian generals have been killed so far, in addition to a host of colonels and other high-ranking officers.

The Kremlin has acknowledged only a few of those deaths. Russian Maj. Gen. Vladimir Frolov was laid to rest in a public ceremony in St. Petersburg last month. Russian media also reported on the death of Maj. Gen. Andrei Sukhovetsky during operations in Ukraine.

Details of the high-level deaths remain murky. U.S. defense officials denied reports that they provided intelligence to the Ukrainian military that helped locate and target those generals and other key Russian military officials.

Still, it seems clear that Russia's battle operations have put upper-echelon officers in the crosshairs.

In one recent daily update on the war, the British Defense Ministry laid out one key reason for so many top-level casualties: a lack of faith in lower-level officers, leading generals to take control of front-line operations and put themselves at much greater risk.

Ukraine's ability to successfully target some of those generals has been a highlight of its better-than-expected showing against a much larger Russian military, which before the invasion was widely regarded as one of the world's best fighting forces.

After abandoning its effort in March to capture the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv, Russian troops turned their attention to eastern Ukraine's disputed Donbas region. Russian forces in recent days reportedly seized the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol, essentially giving Moscow control of most of the strategically vital city.

Western analysts said Russian troops also are hoping to encircle and ultimately capture the eastern city of Severodonetsk. Although its advance in the Donbas has been slowed by stiff Ukrainian resistance, the Russian military is persistently trying to secure eastern Ukraine and create a land bridge to the Crimean Peninsula, which Moscow forcibly annexed in 2014.

The U.S. and its allies said they are ready to send more weapons and other assistance to help the Ukrainian military fend off the Russian advance. Artillery is needed most, Pentagon officials said.

"The nature of the fight ... is really shaped by artillery in this phase," Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told reporters Monday. "We've seen serious exchanges of artillery fire over the last several weeks."

Mr. Austin and other U.S. officials on Monday hosted the second meeting of the Ukraine Contact Group, nations that have agreed to offer military support to Kyiv. Ukraine's defense minister attended the virtual meeting along with officials from nearly 50 other countries.

"Russia's unprovoked and cruel invasion has galvanized countries from around the world," Mr. Austin said. "The bravery, skill and grit of the Ukrainian people has inspired people everywhere."

Mr. Austin said 20 countries have announced new security assistance packages for Ukraine, including vital artillery ammunition and coastal defense systems. Denmark agreed to send anti-ship Harpoon missiles and a launcher to help Ukraine defend its coastline. The Czech Republic said it would donate attack helicopters, tanks and rocket systems.

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HEADLINE	05/23 Wall Street higher after 7 weeks of losses
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/23/wall-street-ends-higher-following-7-straight-weeks/
GIST	<p>NEW YORK — Stocks closed broadly higher Monday, an upbeat start to the week on Wall Street after seven weeks of declines that nearly ended the bull market that began in March 2020.</p> <p>The S&P 500 rose 1.9%, with technology and financial sector stocks doing much of the heavy lifting for the benchmark index. The Dow Industrial Average rose 2% and the Nasdaq climbed 1.6%.</p> <p>The recent heavy selling on the market has primed traders to snap up big tech stocks and shares in other companies that had been high flyers before the market's punishing skid, said Quincy Krosby, chief equity strategist for LPL Financial.</p>

“What we’re seeing today is traders and investors coming in and taking advantage of the lower (price) levels,” she said. “This is the tug-of-war in the market between those saying the market has become attractively valued, versus those who are saying ‘not really,’ because it’s not factoring in much slower growth.”

The S&P 500 gained 72.39 points to 3,973.75. The Dow added 618.34 points to 31,880.24, and the tech-heavy Nasdaq picked up 180.66 points to 11,535.27.

Smaller company stocks also staged a rally. The Russell 2000 rose 19.50 points, or 1.1%, to 1,792.76.

Lingering concerns about inflation have been weighing on the market and have kept major indexes in a slump. The benchmark S&P 500 is coming off its longest weekly losing streak since the dot-com bubble was deflating in 2001. It came close to falling 20% from its peak earlier this year, which would put the index at the heart of most workers’ 401(k) accounts into a bear market.

Inflation’s impact on consumers and businesses has been the key worry for markets, along with the Federal Reserve’s attempt to temper that impact by aggressively raising interest rates. Inflation brought on by a big supply and demand disconnect has worsened because of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and its impact on energy prices. Supply chains were further hurt by China’s recent series of lockdowns for several major cities facing rising COVID-19 cases.

Meanwhile, a series of disappointing earnings reports from key retailers last week raised concerns that consumers are tempering spending on a wide range of goods as they get squeezed by rising inflation.

Investors are worried that the central bank could go too far in raising rates or move too quickly, which could stunt economic growth and potentially bring on a recession. On Wednesday, investors will get a more detailed glimpse into the Fed’s decision-making process with the release of minutes from the latest policy setting meeting.

Wall Street will also get a few economic updates this week from the Commerce Department. On Thursday it will release a report on first-quarter gross domestic product and on Friday it will release data on personal income and spending for April.

Banks made strong gains along with rising bond yields Monday, which they rely on to charge more lucrative interest on loans. The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 2.86% from 2.77% late Friday. Bank of America rose 5.9%.

Technology stocks also did some heavy lifting. Apple rose 4% and Microsoft rose 3.2%. The sector has been choppy over the last few weeks and has prompted many of the market’s recent big swings.

VMware surged 24.8% following a report that chipmaker Broadcom is offering to buy the cloud-computing company. JPMorgan Chase jumped 6.2% after giving investors an encouraging update on its financial forecasts.

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HEADLINE	05/23 US proposes new Asia trade pact
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/may/23/whats-in-bidens-proposed-new-asia-trade-pact/
GIST	<p>TOKYO — President Joe Biden faced a dilemma on trade in Asia: He couldn’t just rejoin the Trans-Pacific Partnership that his predecessor had pulled the U.S. out of in 2017. Many related trade deals, regardless of their content, had become politically toxic for U.S. voters, who associated them with job losses.</p> <p>So Biden came up with a replacement. During Biden’s visit to Tokyo, the U.S. on Monday announced the countries that are joining the new Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. In the tradition of trade deals, it’s best known by its initials: IPEF.</p>

WHO'S IN?

The framework has 13 members, including the U.S., that account for 40% of global gross domestic product: Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

WHAT WOULD IPEF DO?

That's still to be figured out. Monday's announcement signals the start of talks among participating countries to decide what will ultimately be in the framework, so the descriptions for now are largely aspirational. In a broad sense, it's a way for the U.S. to lay down a marker signaling its commitment to remain a leading force in Asia.

"We're writing the new rules for the 21st century economy," Biden said at the announcement. "They're going to help all our countries' economies grow faster and fairer. We'll do that by taking on some of the most acute challenges that drag down growth."

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said IPEF is "focused around the further integration of Indo-Pacific economies, setting of standards and rules, particularly in new areas like the digital economy, and also trying to ensure that there are secure and resilient supply chains."

The idea that new standards for world trade are needed isn't just about discontent among U.S. voters. It's a recognition of how the pandemic disrupted the entire scope of supply chains, shuttering factories, delaying cargo ships, clogging ports and causing higher inflation globally. Those vulnerabilities became even clearer in late February after Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the invasion of Ukraine, causing dangerously high jumps in food and energy costs in parts of the world.

WHO'S GOING TO FIRM UP THE DETAILS?

The negotiations with partner countries will revolve around four pillars, or topics, with the work split between the U.S. trade representative and the Commerce Department.

The U.S. trade representative will handle talks on the "fair" trade pillar. This would likely include efforts to shield U.S. workers from job losses as China's entrance into the World Trade Organization in 2001 led to severe manufacturing layoffs. Those job losses gutted parts of the U.S., angered voters and helped power the political rise of Donald Trump, who, as president, pulled the U.S. out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership almost as soon as he took the oath of office in 2017.

The Commerce Department will oversee negotiations on the other three pillars: supply chain resiliency, infrastructure and climate change, and tax and anti-corruption. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo flew with Biden on Air Force One to Japan. She was also by the president's side during his time in South Korea, where he highlighted investments in U.S. factories by automaker Hyundai and the electronics behemoth Samsung.

An added wrinkle is that countries can choose which pillars they want to belong to, according to an administration official. They are not required to back all four.

WHO ELSE CAN JOIN THE CLUB?

The White House has said IPEF will be an open platform. But it has faced criticism from the Chinese government that any agreement could be an "exclusive" clique that would lead to greater turmoil in the region.

And there are sensitivities to China, the world's second-largest economy, in setting up IPEF. The self-ruled island of Taiwan, which China claims as its own, is being excluded from the pact. This exclusion is

	<p>noteworthy since Taiwan is also a leading manufacturer of computer chips, a key element of the digital economy that will be part of IPEF negotiations.</p> <p>White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said Sunday that any trade talks with Taiwan would be done one to one.</p> <p>HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?</p> <p>Once talks start, negotiations are expected to go 12 to 18 months, an aggressive timeline for a global trade deal, according to an administration official. The official insisted on anonymity to discuss plans and added that building consensus inside the U.S. will also be key.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/24 Day 90 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/24/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-90-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said Vladimir Putin was the only Russian official he was willing to meet with to discuss how to end the war. “The president of the Russian Federation decides it all,” he said in a video address to the World Economic Forum in Davos. “I cannot accept any kind of meeting with anyone coming from the Russian Federation but the president.” • A veteran Russian diplomat in Geneva has resigned over the invasion of Ukraine, in a rare political protest from within the Russian foreign policy establishment. Boris Bondarev, a counsellor at the Russian permanent mission to the UN in Geneva, wrote in a public statement: “Never have I been so ashamed of my country.” He confirmed he had submitted his letter of resignation. • A court in Kyiv has sentenced a Russian soldier to life in prison for the killing of a Ukrainian civilian, in the first verdict in a trial related to war crimes by the Russian army during its invasion of Ukraine. Vadim Shishimarin, a 21-year-old sergeant, was found guilty of killing 62-year-old Oleksandr Shelipov in the Sumy region during the first days of the invasion. • Ukraine’s prosecutor general, Iryna Venediktova, said there were about 13,000 cases of Russian alleged war crimes being investigated as of Monday. Another 48 Russian soldiers were due to face war crimes trials, she said, and Ukrainian officials have a list of about 600 suspects thought to have engaged in war crimes. • Twenty countries announced new security assistance packages and agreed to send more advanced weapons to Ukraine, including a Harpoon launcher and missiles to protect its coast, said Lloyd Austin, the US defence secretary. The new security packages included “critically needed artillery ammunition, coastal defence systems and tanks and other armoured vehicles”. • Denmark pledged to send Harpoon anti-ship missiles that could be used to push the Russian navy away from Ukraine’s Black Sea ports, allowing exports of grain and other agricultural products to resume. • “Low-level” discussions were under way on whether some US troops should be based in Ukraine and how the US may need to adjust its training of Ukrainian forces, said General Mark Milley, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff. • Volodymyr Zelenskiy urged the west to intensify its economic sanctions against Russia as he said business leaders in Davos needed to decide whether “brute force” should rule the world. In a keynote video address to the World Economic Forum, Zelenskiy called for a full oil embargo, the severing of Russian banks from the global financial system, the complete isolation of the Russian IT sector and a ban on trade with Russia. • The European Union will likely agree an embargo on Russian oil imports “within days”, Germany’s economy minister said on Monday. Robert Habeck also told German broadcaster ZDF that the European Commission and the US were working on a proposal to cap global oil prices rather than pay “any price”. • Zelenskiy gave an insight into the level of losses being sustained by Ukrainian forces in the Donbas, saying between 50 to 100 Ukrainians could be dying every day. While Ukraine and

	<p>its allies have made much of Russian losses since the war began, the issue of Ukrainian casualties has been something of a black hole.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearly 90 people were killed in a Russian airstrike on the village of Desna in the northern Ukrainian region of Chernihiv, according to Zelenskiy. Ukrainian authorities said eight people were killed in the strike, which took place last Tuesday. Zelenskiy's figure would give the Desna attack Ukraine's biggest military death toll in a single strike of the war so far. • The Ukrainian fighters who surrendered at the Azovstal steelworks in the port city of Mariupol are to be put on trial, the head of the separatist Donetsk region, Denis Pushilin, told Russian state media. It was not clear what charges the soldiers would face. • The war in Ukraine could cause a recession in weaker economies, the head of the IMF has warned. Kristalina Georgieva predicted that 2022 would be a tough year and declined to rule out a global recession if conditions worsened markedly. • New satellite images reportedly show Russian theft of Ukrainian grain. The pictures released by Maxar Technologies seemingly back up claims from Zelenskiy that food had been gradually stolen from the country, CNN has reported. In the photos, taken from 19 and 21 May, two bulk carrier ships with Russian flags can be seen loading grain from the grain silos they are docked by. • Starbucks is leaving the Russian market, bringing an end to nearly 15 years of business there. The Seattle-based coffee company has 130 stores and nearly 2,000 employees in Russia. McDonalds is also pulling out, removing the "golden arches" from Moscow before leaving for good.
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HEADLINE	05/24 Russia's use of illegal weapons
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/24/ukraine-destruction-how-the-guardian-documented-russia-use-of-weapons
GIST	<p>At about midnight on 1 March 2022, a Russian air force jet dropped a series of 250kg Soviet-era explosives over Borodyanka, north of Kyiv. They were powerful FAB-250 bombs, designed to hit military targets such as enemy fortifications and bunkers. There were no such structures, however, in this quiet town of 13,000 people.</p> <p>The bombs fell on at least five residential buildings, splitting them in two. Dozens of bodies were found under the rubble when the Russians withdrew from the Kyiv region in early April, leaving in their path a gigantic crime scene that Ukrainian prosecutors investigating alleged war crimes by Russia and its president, Vladimir Putin, have been working on for weeks.</p> <p>A war crime is a violation of the laws of war, a component of international law established by the Hague conventions of 1899 and 1907 and further defined by the Geneva conventions of 1949, including the intentional killing of prisoners of war and civilians, torture and the use of illegal weapons. The Guardian has visited the small towns and villages north of Kyiv razed to the ground during the Russian occupation and reviewed evidence found there – as well as other materials from Ukrainian prosecutors – of imprecise munitions such as the FAB-250, metal dart shells and cluster bombs whose use led to the deaths of hundreds of civilians.</p> <p>FAB-250</p> <p>The FAB-250s are among the bombs most used by the Russians against Ukrainian towns in the Kyiv oblast, such as Bucha, Hostomel and Borodyanka. According to investigators, at least eight buildings in the towns north of Kyiv were destroyed by these powerful, unguided bombs, causing hundreds of deaths. The FAB-250 is a very inaccurate, airdropped bomb, largely employed by the former Soviet Union in its war in Afghanistan and by Russia in Syria.</p> <p>The tactics appear to have come directly from the civil war in Syria, which Moscow joined in 2015 to support the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad. The buildings destroyed in Borodyanka by the FAB-250s exhibit levels of destruction very similar to the razed buildings in Aleppo.</p>

The FAB-250s freefall from bombers and, in their design at least, are intended for use against surface military fortification. Although Russia says it is trying to destroy military targets, evidence collected or reviewed by the Guardian during visits to Bucha, Hostomel and Borodyanka, and independently verified by weapons experts, shows these bombs were dropped on residential buildings and civilian infrastructure.

Fléchettes

Pathologists and coroners carrying out postmortems on bodies found in mass graves in the region north of Kyiv have found tiny metal arrows embedded in people's heads and chests. Independent weapons experts who reviewed pictures of the metal arrows found in the bodies have confirmed that they were fléchettes, an anti-personnel weapon widely used during the first world war.

These small metal darts are contained in field gun shells of a type fired by Russian artillery in the towns of Bucha and Irpin. Each shell can contain up to 8,000 fléchettes. Once fired, the shells burst when a timed fuse detonates and explodes above the ground. The fléchette darts, typically 3-4cm in length, disperse in a wide conical arch spanning 300 metres by 100 metres.

On impact with a victim's body, the dart loses rigidity and bends into a hook, while the arrow's rear, made of four fins, often breaks away and causes a second wound. The munitions are not prohibited under international law, despite human rights groups long seeking a ban on fléchette shells. However, the use of imprecise lethal weapons in densely populated civilian areas is a violation of humanitarian law.

Fléchettes were dropped during the first world war from the then novel aeroplanes to attack infantry and pierce their helmets. They were not widely used during the second world war, but re-emerged in the Vietnam war when the US employed a version of them packed into plastic cups.

The Guardian also found a number of fléchettes in Irpin, where several residents said they had found them nailed on to their cars.

Cluster bombs

Bellingcat, a nonprofit online journalism collective dedicated to war crime investigations, reviewed some of the pictures collected by the Guardian and confirmed the presence of cluster bombs in towns and villages occupied by the Russians in [Ukraine](#).

Russia's withdrawal from the Kyiv region in early April has revealed evidence of cluster munitions – shells or bombs that release dozens of smaller munitions – in the wreckage of cars, streets and civilian buildings and in dead bodies. The weapons, banned in more than 100 countries (but not the US, Russia or Ukraine) under a 2008 treaty called the convention on cluster munitions, were unleashed in areas with no military personnel and no military infrastructure. Russia has repeatedly denied targeting civilians and has said Ukrainian allegations of war crimes are concocted.

The submunitions in a cluster bomb are designed to release over a wide area, but they do not always explode, posing a future risk to civilians.

The wrecks of dozens of cars in Bucha and Borodyanka, seen and photographed by the Guardian and reviewed by experts, show the characteristic holes caused by submunitions from cluster bombs used by the Russian military. The use of cluster bombs and cluster munitions has also been widely reported in other areas of Ukraine. When a team from Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) entered an oncology hospital in Mykolaiv, south-east Ukraine, on 4 April, several explosions took place in close proximity to the staff.

The Guardian found a Russian cluster rocket near a farm village in Hostomel and fragments of tail fins from RBK-500 cluster bombs with PTAB-1M submunitions and cluster rockets in other towns north of Kyiv. The impact of cluster bombs in these areas was so large that in some cases they hit and killed numerous animals. A short distance from the cluster bomb found at Hostomel, the carcasses of two horses show clear marks of its submunitions on their bodies.

	In Borodyanka, prosecutors have spent days exhuming dozens of victims who were hastily buried in local cemeteries by relatives during the bombing, because, according to the authorities, many of them were killed by cluster bombs. Coroners in areas north of Kyiv confirmed to the Guardian that they had found fragments of cluster munitions embedded in bodies dug out in the area. The findings are being classified by coroners and will be reported to The Hague, where charges of war crimes committed by Russia could be formalised in the coming months.
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HEADLINE	05/23 Confusion, not clarity; China tensions
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/23/biden-taiwan-china-strategic-ambiguity-us-foreign-policy
GIST	<p>The somewhat routine press conference in Tokyo was winding down when the question came. “Are you willing to get involved militarily to defend Taiwan if it comes to that?”</p> <p>Many past American presidents would have deflected, demurred, declined to give a straight answer. Not Joe Biden. “Yes,” he replied bluntly, adding: “That’s the commitment we made.”</p> <p>Reporters at the scene were taken aback. Sebastian Smith, the White House correspondent for Agence France-Presse, tweeted that Biden’s answer “really raised adrenaline levels in that palace briefing room right now. Next we all get to try and explain what it all actually means.”</p> <p>One possible meaning is that America has abandoned its long-held position of “strategic ambiguity” on Taiwan. But Biden may have delivered not so much strategic clarity as strategic confusion. That would be on brand for a president who has made a habit of speaking without a diplomatic filter.</p> <p>China considers the democratic island of Taiwan its territory under its “one-China” principle, and says it is the most sensitive and important issue in its relationship with Washington.</p> <p>This is where strategic ambiguity comes in. While the US is required by law to provide Taiwan with the means to defend itself, it has never directly promised to intervene militarily in a conflict with China – but also never promised to stay out.</p> <p>This deliberate vagueness has – so far – helped deter China from invading Taiwan while also helping deter the self-ruled island from declaring full independence. Either scenario would trigger a major geopolitical crisis.</p> <p>Last year, Kurt Campbell, the US policy coordinator for the Indo-Pacific, defended the principle of strategic ambiguity, saying there were “significant downsides” to “strategic clarity”.</p> <p>But Biden has already shown himself less comfortable with shades of grey than his predecessors, insisting on a full withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan last year despite the ensuing chaos and collapse than enabled the Taliban to regain power. He has also been pushing the envelope on Taiwan for some time.</p> <p>In an ABC News interview last August, he appeared to put Taiwan in the same category as other countries with which Washington has explicit defence commitments, such as South Korea.</p> <p>Then, in October, the president told a CNN town hall, “Yes, we have a commitment to do that,” when asked if the US would come to the defence of Taiwan. Bonnie Glaser, a Taiwan expert at the German Marshall Fund of the United States thinktank in Washington, called Biden’s remark a “gaffe” and said it was “patently not true” that the US has a commitment to defend Taiwan.</p> <p>Since then Biden has reiterated America’s “rock-solid” commitment to Taiwan, the influential congressman Adam Schiff has urged the Biden administration to be less ambiguous about the issue, and Antony Blinken, the secretary of state, has warned that the US and its allies would take unspecified “action” if China were to use force to alter the status quo over Taiwan.</p>

After Biden made the remark at a joint press conference on Monday with the Japanese prime minister, Fumio Kishida, an aide said the president's statement represented no change in the longstanding American stance to the island. [A source told CNN](#) that Biden meant providing weapons, not deploying boots on the ground.

But with the Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, Wang Wenbin, expressing "strong dissatisfaction and resolute opposition" to Biden's comments, such clean-ups look increasingly untenable.

Richard Haass, president of the Council on Foreign Relations thinktank in Washington, tweeted: "This is the third time Potus has spoken out in favor of strategic clarity on Taiwan and third time WH staff has tried to walk it back. Better to embrace it as new US stance, one that is fully consistent with one-China policy but that alters how US will go about implementing it."

Glaser, of the the German Marshall Fund, added in a Twitter post: "A senior official from the Biden administration should give a comprehensive speech on US policy toward Taiwan. The confusion and misstatements are more likely to undermine deterrence than strengthen it."

What may have partly changed the calculus is Russia's unprovoked and disastrous invasion of Ukraine. Some in Washington believe that the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, is coming to realise that he underestimated America's willingness to lead and underestimated the resolve and unity of the west. The struggles of the Russian military suggest that the Chinese military would not have cakewalk.

On Monday, Biden said he hoped the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, would pay a price for his invasion of Ukraine in part to show China what it would face if it were to invade Taiwan.

He may feel emboldened because, so far, there has been little downside to speaking his mind unscripted on Ukraine (or for the US government's approach of radical transparency). In March, [in response to a reporter's question](#) at the White House, he said of Putin: "I think he is a war criminal."

The then White House press secretary, Jen Psaki, noting that a legal review was still under way at the state department, explained: "He was speaking from his heart."

There was bigger gaffe later that month when Biden upended a carefully crafted speech in Warsaw with an ad lib at the end, again regarding Putin: "For God's sake, this man cannot remain in power." But after a kerfuffle for 48 hours, the controversy more or less dissipated, with some defending Biden as a truth-teller who cuts through speechwriters' waffle.

Jon Meacham, a presidential historian and occasional adviser to Biden, has described the president as "like [an upside down iceberg](#)" – mostly visible without much mystery. Valerie Biden Owens, his sister and longtime campaign manger, told the Guardian [in a recent interview](#): "He doesn't have gaffes. He speaks the truth. Like, hello, surprise, I just said what was true! ... You see what you get with Joe."

This, perhaps, is one of the few things that he and his predecessor Donald Trump share in common: a tendency to plain-speaking that many find authentic and refreshing after a generation of slick, focus group-manufactured politicians. It proved an asset for both on the campaign trail.

But as Trump demonstrated often, it is a high wire act full of perils when global security hangs in the balance.

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HEADLINE	05/23 Amazon faces slowdown online shopping
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Amazon-to-sublease-warehouses-as-online-shopping-17193372.php
GIST	Amazon is planning to sublease some of its warehouse space now that the pandemic-fueled surge in online shopping, which helped the e-commerce giant rake in soaring profits in the past two years, has eased.

	<p>Subleasing allows the company to “relieve the financial obligations associated with an existing building that no longer meets” its needs, Amazon spokesperson Alisa Carroll said.</p> <p>Carroll didn’t disclose how much space the company plans to sublet. But citing anonymous sources, Bloomberg News and The Wall Street Journal reported earlier that the retailer would sublease at least 10 million square feet of space and could end more of its leases in states including New York, New Jersey and California.</p> <p>Seattle-based Amazon doubled the size of its operations during the pandemic, adding more warehouses and workers to keep up with demand from homebound consumers who felt more comfortable buying things online. But as the worst of the pandemic eased, it found itself with too much warehouse space and too many workers.</p> <p>“Subleasing is something many established corporations do to help manage their real estate portfolio,” Carroll said.</p> <p>Last month, the company reported its first quarterly loss since 2015, fueled by the e-commerce slowdown and a massive write-down of its investment in the electric-vehicle startup Rivian Automotive. In a statement released last month with its earnings results, CEO Andy Jassy said the company was now focused on improving productivity.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 UN refugee agency: 100M displaced
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/un-refugee-agency-number-of-displaced-tops-100-million/
GIST	<p>BERLIN (AP) — The number of people forced to flee conflict, violence, human rights violations and persecution has crossed the milestone of 100 million for the first time on record, propelled by the war in Ukraine and other deadly conflicts, The U.N. refugee agency said Monday.</p> <p>“One hundred million is a stark figure — sobering and alarming in equal measure,” said UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi. “It’s a record that should never have been set.</p> <p>“This must serve as a wake-up call to resolve and prevent destructive conflicts, end persecution and address the underlying causes that force innocent people to flee their homes,” Grandi added.</p> <p>UNHCR said that the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide approached 90 million by the end of 2021, propelled by new waves of violence or protracted conflict in countries including Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Myanmar, Nigeria, Afghanistan and Congo.</p> <p>Since then, the war in Ukraine has forced more than 6 million people to flee the country and a further 8 million are displaced within Ukraine.</p> <p>The 100 million figure represents more than 1% of the global population and comprises refugees and asylum-seekers as well as people displaced inside their own countries by conflict — a figure that the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre recently put at 53.2 million — the UNCHR said in a statement.</p> <p>“The international response to people fleeing war in Ukraine has been overwhelmingly positive,” Grandi said. “Compassion is alive and we need a similar mobilization for all crises around the world.”</p> <p>However, Grandi pointed out that ultimately “humanitarian aid is a palliative, not a cure.”</p> <p>“To reverse this trend, the only answer is peace and stability so that innocent people are not forced to gamble between acute danger at home or precarious flight and exile,” Grandi said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 Pfizer: 3 Covid shots protect kids under 5
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SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/pfizer-says-3-covid-shots-protect-children-under-5/
GIST	<p>Three doses of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine offer strong protection for children younger than 5, the company announced Monday, another step toward shots for the littlest kids possibly beginning in early summer.</p> <p>Pfizer plans to submit the findings to U.S. regulators later this week. The Food and Drug Administration already is evaluating an application by rival Moderna to offer two-dose vaccinations to tots — and set June 15 as a tentative date for its independent scientific advisers to publicly debate the data from one or both companies.</p> <p>The news comes after months of anxious waiting by parents desperate to vaccinate their babies, toddlers and preschoolers, especially as COVID-19 cases once again are rising. The 18 million youngsters under 5 are the only group in the U.S. not yet eligible for COVID-19 vaccination.</p> <p>Pfizer has had a bumpy time figuring out its approach. It aims to give tots an extra low dose — just one-tenth of the amount adults receive — but discovered during its trial that two shots didn't seem quite strong enough for preschoolers. So researchers gave a third shot to more than 1,600 youngsters — from age 6 months to 4 years — during the winter surge of the omicron variant.</p> <p>In a press release, Pfizer and its partner BioNTech said the extra shot did the trick, revving up the children's levels of virus-fighting antibodies enough to meet FDA criteria for emergency use of the vaccine with no safety problems.</p> <p>Preliminary data suggested the three-dose series is 80% effective in preventing symptomatic COVID-19, the companies said, but they cautioned the calculation is based on just 10 cases diagnosed among study participants by the end of April. The study rules state that at least 21 cases are needed to formally determine effectiveness, and Pfizer promised an update as soon as more data is available.</p> <p>While the vaccine effectiveness likely could change somewhat, "all of this is very positive for those parents who are looking forward to having a vaccine for their younger children in the coming months," said Dr. William Moss of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, who was not part of the study.</p> <p>If FDA confirms the data, the vaccine could "be an important tool to help parents protect their children," agreed Dr. Jesse Goodman of Georgetown University, a former FDA vaccine chief. But he cautioned that it's essential to track how long protection lasts, especially against serious disease.</p> <p>What's next? FDA vaccine chief Dr. Peter Marks has pledged the agency will "move quickly without sacrificing our standards" in evaluating tot-sized doses from both Pfizer and Moderna.</p> <p>Comparing the two companies' approaches to vaccinating the littlest kids promises to be challenging.</p> <p>Moderna asked FDA to authorize two shots, each containing a quarter of the dose given to adults. While that spurred good levels of virus-fighting antibodies, Moderna's study found effectiveness against symptomatic COVID-19 was just 40% to 50% during the omicron surge, much like for adults who've only had two vaccine doses.</p> <p>"We've learned in older children and adults that ... we really need three doses to get protection" against newer variants like omicron, Moss said.</p> <p>That's something Moderna plans to study, and Moss said he didn't expect the question would hold up FDA authorization of the first two doses.</p> <p>Complicating Moderna's progress, the FDA so far has allowed its vaccine to be used only in adults. Other countries allow it to be given as young as age 6, and the company also is seeking FDA authorization for teens and elementary-age kids.</p>

The FDA has tentatively planned for its expert panel to consider Moderna's vaccine for older kids a day before taking up the question of shots for the littlest.

If FDA clears either vaccine or both, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention would have to recommend whether all kids under 5 should receive the shots or only those at high risk.

While COVID-19 generally isn't as dangerous to youngsters as to adults, some children do become severely ill or even die. And the omicron variant hit children especially hard, with those under 5 hospitalized at higher rates than at the peak of the previous delta surge.

It's not clear how much demand there will be to vaccinate the youngest kids. Pfizer shots for 5- to 11-year-olds opened in November, but only about 30% of that age group have gotten the recommended initial two doses. Last week, U.S. health authorities said elementary-age children should get a booster shot just like everyone 12 and older is supposed to get, for the best protection against the latest coronavirus variants.

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HEADLINE	05/23 Time's '100 most influential' list: 2 from UW
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/2-uw-medicine-professors-named-to-times-100-most-influential-people-of-2022-list
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Genome scientist Evan Eichler and infectious disease researcher Tulio de Oliveira are both professors at the University of Washington School of Medicine. They have also been named to the TIME 100 List, gaining recognition with the likes of famous artists, innovators, activists and world leaders.</p> <p>The TIME 100 list, published annually since 1999, catalogs the most influential people in the world—for better or for worse. Making the list this year were cultural juggernauts like Tim Cook and Oprah Winfrey, artists like Zendaya, Simu Liu and Andrew Garfield, and world leaders like Joe Biden, Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelenskyy.</p> <p>This year's list also includes two UW Medicine scientists, included for their part in COVID-19 research and human genome sequencing.</p> <p>Evan Eichler is a genome sciences professor, and was honored as part of the team—which includes Adam Phillippy, Karen Miga and Michael Schatz—that finished mapping the human genome. Long ago published at 85% completion, the Humane Genome Project was pocked with gaps that remained unfilled and unknown for decades afterward. Eichler's lab pioneered advances in DNA sequencing that allowed them to identify areas that are 'uniquely human,' not shared by any other species.</p> <p>This work provides the clearest look at "the very nature of who we are as human beings," writes biochemist and 2020 Nobel Prize winner Jennifer Doudna.</p> <p>Tulio de Oliveira is an affiliate professor in UW's Department of Global Health, and is a faculty member of the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban, South Africa. Oliveira and his former Ph.D. student—Sikhulile Moyo, now laboratory director at the Botswana-Harvard HIV Reference Laboratory—first detected and reported the COVID-19 Omicron variant in November.</p> <p>The two detected the variant in COVID-positive samples in Africa, which alerted the world to brace for another wave of coronavirus infections. De Oliveira's work in the past 20 years has also informed public health responses to Zika, HIV, dengue and COVID-19, UW Medicine says.</p> <p>"The international response to news of this discovery—which included travel bans imposed on African countries by other nations—was complex," writes John Nkengasong, director of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. "It made me reflect on what global cooperation and solidarity must look like when we fight a common threat like COVID-19."</p>

HEADLINE	05/23 Pledge: defend Taiwan if China attacks
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/23/world/asia/biden-taiwan-china.html
GIST	<p>TOKYO — President Biden signaled on Monday that he would use military force to defend Taiwan if it were ever attacked by China, dispensing with the “strategic ambiguity” traditionally favored by American presidents, and drawing a firmer line at a time of rising tensions in the region.</p> <p>At a news conference during a visit to Japan, Mr. Biden suggested that he would be willing to go further on behalf of Taiwan than he has in helping Ukraine, where he has provided tens of billions of dollars in weapons as well as intelligence assistance to help defeat Russian invaders but has refused to send American troops.</p> <p>“You didn’t want to get involved in the Ukraine conflict militarily for obvious reasons,” a reporter said to Mr. Biden. “Are you willing to get involved militarily to defend Taiwan if it comes to that?”</p> <p>“Yes,” Mr. Biden answered flatly.</p> <p>“You are?” the reporter followed up.</p> <p>“That’s the commitment we made,” he said.</p> <p>The president’s declaration, offered without caveat or clarification, set the stage for fresh tensions between the United States and China, which insists that Taiwan is a part of its territory and cannot exist as a sovereign nation.</p> <p>It also surprised some members of Mr. Biden’s own administration watching in the room, who did not expect him to promise such unvarnished resolve. The United States has historically warned China against using force against Taiwan while generally remaining vague about how far it would go to aid the island in such a circumstance.</p> <p>The White House quickly tried to deny that the president meant what he seemed to be saying. “As the president said, our policy has not changed,” the White House said in a statement hurriedly sent to reporters. “He reiterated our One China Policy and our commitment to peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. He also reiterated our commitment under the Taiwan Relations Act to provide Taiwan with the military means to defend itself.”</p> <p>Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III sounded the same themes when asked by reporters back in Washington. “I think the president was clear on the fact that the policy has not changed,” he said.</p> <p>But Mr. Biden’s comments went beyond simply reiterating that the United States would provide Taiwan with arms, because the question was posed as a contrast to what he had done with Ukraine.</p> <p>In fact, he repeated the notion that he was committed to doing more than what he had done for Ukraine. “The idea that it can be taken by force, just taken by force, is just not appropriate,” he said of Taiwan. “It would dislocate the entire region and be another action similar to what happened in Ukraine. And so it’s a burden that is even stronger.”</p> <p>Neither Mr. Biden nor anyone in his administration elaborated on what specifically would be entailed by getting “militarily involved” and the president did not respond to questions at a later event asking for more detail. But he left the clear impression that he meant that American forces would be deployed for Taiwan in some fashion.</p> <p>“President Biden seems to have staked out a new position somewhere between ‘strategic clarity’ and ‘strategic ambiguity,’” said Danny Russel, vice president of the Asia Society Policy Institute and a former adviser to President Barack Obama. “He’s clear about his belief that the U.S. should respond in the event</p>

of Chinese military aggression against Taiwan. But he's ambiguous about what exactly that means and what it is based on."

As president, Mr. Biden has ignored before the practiced imprecision of his predecessors with regard to China and Taiwan. Last August, in reassuring allies after his decision to abandon the government of Afghanistan, he promised that "we would respond" if there was an attack against a fellow member of NATO and then added, "same with Japan, same with South Korea, same with Taiwan."

Taiwan, however, has never been granted the same U.S. security guarantees as Japan, South Korea or America's NATO allies, and so the comment was seen as significant. Two months later, Mr. Biden was asked during a televised town hall if the United States would protect Taiwan from attack. "Yes, we have a commitment to do that," he said. That also set off a frantic scramble by the White House to walk back his remark by insisting that he was not changing longstanding policy.

War in Taiwan does not appear to be imminent, and Mr. Biden said "my expectation is it will not happen." But China's leader, Xi Jinping, has taken a more aggressive stance than his predecessors, who long vowed to bring the island under their control, viewing the issue as the unfinished business of a bloody civil war waged more than 70 years ago.

For many in Taiwan, China's authoritarian turn under Mr. Xi, and its moves to crush pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong, have made any deeper political ties to the country unpalatable. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has heightened urgency in Washington, where officials are re-examining Taiwan's defensive capabilities to ensure it could fight off an invasion.

The war has been watched closely in Asia, too, for whatever lessons it would hold for China's intentions toward Taiwan. If Russia had succeeded in conquering Ukraine, once part of its empire, some feared it would set a dangerous precedent. Yet Russia's failure to take over the entire country and the unified Western response may serve as a red flag to military adventurism.

China sent 14 aircraft into the island's air defense zone last week on the day that Mr. Biden arrived in Asia, according to Taiwan's Defense Ministry, part of a pattern of increasing incursions over the last year. Taiwan scrambled fighter jets in response, but no direct conflict was reported.

On Monday, Taiwan's Foreign Ministry welcomed Mr. Biden's latest comments, expressing "gratitude" to the president for affirming America's "rock-solid commitment to Taiwan." In a statement, the ministry said Taiwan would "continue to improve its self-defense capabilities and deepen cooperation with the United States and Japan and other like-minded countries."

Beijing, on the other hand, rejected the president's remarks. "On issues concerning China's sovereignty, territorial integrity and other core interests, China has no room for compromise," Wang Wenbin, a Foreign Ministry spokesman, told reporters, adding that no one should underestimate China's determination to defend itself.

Mr. Biden's comments came barely an hour before he formally unveiled a new 13-nation Indo-Pacific Economic Framework intended to serve as a counter to Chinese influence in the region. The new bloc will bring the United States together with countries like Japan, India, South Korea, Australia and others to write future rules of commerce in areas like supply chain resilience, digital trade, clean energy and corruption.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida of Japan, who joined Mr. Biden for the earlier news conference, expressed concern about a Ukraine-style conflict over Taiwan. Any "unilateral attempt to change the status quo by force like Russia's aggression against Ukraine this time should never be tolerated in the Indo-Pacific," he said.

	<p>Nonetheless, he stuck to the traditional policy and maintained before the president's comments that U.S.-Japan policy on the island was still the same. "Our two countries' basic position on Taiwan remains unchanged," he said.</p> <p>Mr. Biden's unscripted declaration put Japan in a complicated position. With Taiwan just 65 miles from Yonaguni, the westernmost inhabited Japanese island, a war with China carries enormous potential consequences for Japan, which has disavowed armed conflict since its defeat in World War II.</p> <p>"Certainly, Mr. Biden said 'America is in,'" said Narushige Michishita, vice president of the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies in Tokyo. "That means Japan will be in, too."</p> <p>While Mr. Kishida would not be so blunt as Mr. Biden, he added, his administration aims to increase Japan's defense budget, while discussing plans to acquire weapons capable of striking missile launch sites in enemy territory and to conduct more exercises with American forces.</p> <p>"Chinese planners must take the possibility of Japan getting involved into account when they plan and when they decide whether or not to attack Taiwan," Mr. Michishita said. Forcing China to consider the prospect of facing American and Japanese forces, he said, would ultimately "enhance the possibility of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 Health officials assess monkeypox vaccines
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/23/health/monkeypox-vaccines.html
GIST	<p>As more than a dozen countries grapple with outbreaks of monkeypox, health officials worldwide are rushing to assess reserves of vaccines and treatments that may be needed to contain the spread.</p> <p>The U.S. emergency stockpile holds two vaccines approved by the Food and Drug Administration that could be used to contain monkeypox, officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention told reporters on Monday.</p> <p>The stockpile contains more than 100 million doses of the original smallpox vaccine. But that vaccine is associated with side effects and shouldn't be given to certain patients, including those who are immuno-compromised.</p> <p>A newer vaccine, called Jynneos, was approved in 2019 for prevention of both smallpox and monkeypox. More than 1,000 doses are held in the stockpile, Dr. Jennifer McQuiston, a deputy director at the C.D.C., said.</p> <p>"We expect that level to ramp up very quickly in the coming weeks, as the company provides more doses to us," she said. Doses have already been requested from the stockpile for inoculation of some high-risk contacts, she added.</p> <p>Still, the dimensions of the problem in the United States are not yet clear. As of Monday, officials had confirmed just one case, in Massachusetts, and were evaluating four other patients.</p> <p>The situation overseas is more concerning. As of Monday, there were more than 100 confirmed cases in 14 countries outside Africa, and dozens more under investigation. That day, the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control urged health officials in Europe to assess the availability of smallpox vaccines, antivirals and personal protective equipment.</p> <p>The World Health Organization is holding stockpiles of about 31 million smallpox vaccine doses, but they may have lost some potency in the decades since they were made.</p> <p>The largest monkeypox clusters have been reported in Europe, particularly in Spain, prompting some experts to hypothesize that the outbreaks originated in that country. Spanish officials are</p>

investigating two potential sources: a Gay Pride event held in the Canary Islands beginning on May 5 that drew about 80,000 revelers, as well as a sauna in Madrid.

Although many of the initial infections in Europe were reported among men who have sex with men, other segments of the population are clearly vulnerable. Officials “must keep a broad definition, so as not to leave out other groups which may emerge as being important,” said Dr. Boghuma Titanji, an infectious diseases physician at Emory University in Atlanta.

Britain [reported its first cases](#) of monkeypox in patients with no known links to West Africa just over a week after the event in the Canary Islands. But some experts said the pattern of infections suggested that the virus might have been circulating outside Africa for several months.

The monkeypox virus is endemic to West and Central Africa, and continuing community transmission elsewhere is highly unusual. “We do not usually see this level of apparently sustained spread in outbreaks occurring outside of endemic regions and not associated to travel or animal exposure,” Dr. Titanji said.

President Biden [warned on Sunday](#) that “everybody should be concerned,” but added the next day that the United States had enough doses of vaccine to protect Americans. In any event, mass immunization campaigns are unlikely in any country, including the United States, several experts said. And the outbreaks are unlikely to warrant such a campaign.

Instead, officials may recommend immunizing a circle of close contacts around those found to be infected — an approach called ring vaccination that has been used to suppress other outbreaks of rare diseases.

Mass immunization campaigns are not recommended because the older smallpox vaccine can have rare but severe side effects, such as inflammation of the heart muscle. That vaccine also may be risky for immunosuppressed people, including those with undetected H.I.V. infection. It can be fatal even in people with eczema, which affects an [estimated 30 percent](#) of Americans.

After the Sept. 11 attacks, the United States considered immunizing the entire population to protect against a terrorist attack using smallpox. “In the end, it was decided no, because of the negative consequences of vaccinating lots of people,” Bill Hanage, an epidemiologist at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

“Vaccine side effects are rare,” he added. “But once you start giving it to millions of people, then they will start to add up.”

[Newer generation vaccines](#) like Jynneos are likely to be safer for large groups, and ring vaccination may be enough to contain the virus. “Hopefully, presumably, monkeypox is still relatively rare right now, and a ring vaccination strategy may well be able to keep it completely at bay,” Dr. Hanage said.

In addition to vaccines for prevention, the United States has procured more than two million doses of an antiviral pill called tecovirimat, which is [approved](#) to treat smallpox in those who become infected, according to the C.D.C. The agency is also working with the drug’s manufacturer to develop an intravenous form.

Human monkeypox was first identified in 1970 in a 9-year-old boy in a region of the Democratic Republic of Congo where smallpox had been eliminated. Monkeypox cases in the country have [significantly increased](#) in the decades since smallpox mass vaccination ended.

In 2003, the United States recorded dozens of monkeypox cases that were traced to infected pets. Although the virus was first discovered in 1958 in monkeys kept for research purposes, it is spread by rodents.

A week to two weeks after exposure, infected people may begin to experience fever, sore throat, cough, fatigue and body aches. They also develop a distinct rash, first on the face, then on the palms of the hand

and soles of the feet, and then all over the body. The lesions blister, grow and fill with a white puslike substance.

The pustules, reminiscent of smallpox's most distinguishing feature, last for about a week before they scab over and heal. Monkeypox patients may also have swollen lymph nodes in the neck, the armpit and the groin.

In some cases, the rash may not be visible because it may be limited to the genital area. The virus can still spread through physical contact or contaminated bed linens, clothes or other materials.

Infected people should remain isolated at home and abstain from sexual activity until their scabs dry and fall off. "These are basic strategies that we use in responding to outbreaks all around the world, and they work," Dr. McQuiston, the C.D.C. official, said.

Infected people should also avoid close contact with immuno-suppressed people, pregnant women and children, all of whom are at high risk of complications if they acquire the virus. Health officials in Belgium are now asking close contacts of infected people to [quarantine](#).

"It's another reason why if you're a person who may be at risk due to a weakened immune system to be particularly careful about seeking out early care and evaluation," Dr. John Brooks, a medical epidemiologist at the C.D.C., said.

On Monday, the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control also cautioned infected people against close contact with pets — and not just because of the animals' health.

"If human-to-animal transmission occurs, and the virus spreads in an animal population, there is a risk that the disease could become endemic in Europe," the agency warned.

Some experts have feared for years that there might be a [resurgence of monkeypox](#).

The last known cases of smallpox occurred in 1977, and it was declared eradicated in 1980. With the end of immunization programs for smallpox, the number of people who are susceptible to this family of viruses [has risen](#) each year.

Scientists in Portugal [sequenced the monkeypox virus](#) in skin lesion samples collected from a male patient on May 4, but that sequence is incomplete. So far, the current strain appears to be closely related to versions exported from Nigeria to Britain, Israel and Singapore in 2018 and 2019, researchers have concluded.

The United States sequenced a sample from the first confirmed case, in Massachusetts, within 48 hours and has shared the sequence publicly. The samples from Massachusetts and Portugal seem closely related, Dr. McQuiston said.

"All signs point to this being an outbreak associated with person-to-person spread," she added.

The West African version of the virus is thought to cause milder symptoms. It does not spread easily among people and has a fatality rate of about 4 percent, compared with a mortality rate of about 11 percent with the Central African version and 30 percent for smallpox. No deaths have been reported in the current outbreaks.

There is no indication that the virus has changed significantly in virulence or mode of transmission. Unlike the rapidly mutating RNA-based coronavirus, monkeypox is a large DNA virus that is capable of correcting its genetic errors.

“These are particularly stable viruses, so monkeypox is less prone to mutations,” said Dr. Raina MacIntyre, an epidemiologist at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia, and a member of the W.H.O.’s working group on monkeypox.

“I’d be very surprised and very puzzled if there was some dramatic mutation that makes it much more transmissible,” she said.

And this is not the coronavirus. “There really isn’t at this point any mass population risk,” she added. “The virus, as far as we know, is still not very contagious.”

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HEADLINE	05/23 How serious is monkeypox?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/article/monkeypox-virus-covid.html
GIST	<p>Health officials are tracking more than 100 cases of confirmed or suspected monkeypox that have appeared in countries where the disease does not typically occur, including Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States.</p> <p>On Sunday, President Biden addressed the highly unusual cases, stating that “it is a concern in the sense that if it were to spread it would be consequential.” After more than two years of living through a pandemic, it is understandable that the news of a new virus spreading across the globe could cause alarm, but health experts say that monkeypox is unlikely to create a scenario similar to that of the coronavirus, even if more cases are found. “As surveillance expands, we do expect that more cases will be seen. But we need to put this into context because it’s not Covid,” Dr. Maria Van Kerkhove, the World Health Organization’s technical lead on Covid-19, said in a live online Q&A on Monday.</p> <p>Monkeypox is not a new virus, and it is not spread in the same way as the coronavirus, so we asked experts for a better understanding of the pathogen — and how the disease it causes is different from Covid-19.</p> <p>How contagious is monkeypox?</p> <p>People typically catch monkeypox by coming into close contact with infected animals. That can be through an animal bite, scratch, bodily fluids, feces or by consuming meat that isn’t cooked enough, said Ellen Carlin, a researcher at Georgetown University who studies zoonotic diseases that are transmitted from animals to humans.</p> <p>Although it was first discovered in laboratory monkeys in 1958, which gives the virus its name, scientists think rodents are the main carriers of monkeypox in the wild. It is primarily found in Central and West Africa, particularly in areas close to tropical rainforests — and rope squirrels, tree squirrels, Gambian pouched rats and dormice have all been identified as potential carriers.</p> <p>“The virus has probably been circulating in these animals for a very, very long time,” Dr. Carlin said. “And for the most part, it has stayed in animal populations.”</p> <p>The first human case of monkeypox was detected in 1970 in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Since then, the virus has periodically caused small outbreaks, though most have been limited to a few hundred cases in 11 African countries.</p> <p>A handful of cases have made it to other continents, brought by travelers or the import of exotic animals that passed the virus to house pets and then to their owners.</p> <p>But human-to-human transmission of monkeypox virus is pretty rare, Dr. Van Kerkhove said.</p> <p>“Transmission is really happening from close physical contact, skin-to-skin contact. So it’s quite different from Covid in that sense.”</p>

The virus can also spread by touching or sharing infected items like clothing and bedding, or by the respiratory droplets produced by sneezing or coughing, [according to the W.H.O.](#)

That may sound eerily familiar because in the early days of the pandemic many experts said that the coronavirus also had little human-to-human transmission beyond respiratory droplets and contaminated surfaces. Later research showed that the coronavirus can spread through much smaller particles called aerosols with the ability to travel distances [greater than six feet](#). But that doesn't mean the same will turn out to be true for the monkeypox virus, said Luis Sigal, an expert in poxviruses at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia. The coronavirus is a tiny, single-stranded RNA virus, which may have aided its ability to become airborne. The monkeypox virus, however, is made of double-stranded DNA, which means that the virus itself is much larger and heavier and unable to travel as far, Dr. Sigal said.

Other routes of monkeypox transmission include from mother to fetus via the placenta or during close contact during and after birth.

The majority of cases this year have been in young men, many of whom self-identified as men who have sex with men, though experts are cautious about suggesting that monkeypox transmission may occur through semen or other bodily fluids exchanged during sex. Instead, contact with infected lesions during sex may be a more plausible route. "This is not a gay disease, as some people in social media have attempted to label it," Dr. Andy Seale, an adviser with the W.H.O.'s H.I.V., Hepatitis and S.T.I.s Program, said during Monday's Q&A. "Anybody can contract monkeypox through close contact."

What are the symptoms and how bad can a monkeypox infection get?

Monkeypox is part of the same family of viruses as smallpox, but it is typically a much more mild condition, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). On average, symptoms appear within six to 13 days of exposure, but can take up to three weeks. People who get sick commonly experience a fever, headache, back and muscle aches, swollen lymph nodes and general exhaustion.

About one to three days after getting a fever, most people also develop a painful rash that is characteristic of poxviruses. It starts with flat red marks that become raised and filled with pus over the course of the next five to seven days. The rash can start on a patient's face, hands, feet, the inside of their mouth or on their genitals, and progress to the rest of the body. (While chickenpox causes a similar-looking rash, it is not a true poxvirus, but is caused by the unrelated varicella-zoster virus).

Once an individual's pustules scab over, in [two to four weeks](#), they are no longer infectious, said Angela Rasmussen, a virologist at the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada.

Children and people with underlying immune deficiencies may have more severe cases, but monkeypox is rarely fatal. While one strain found in Central Africa can kill up to 10 percent of infected individuals, estimates suggest that the version of the virus currently circulating has a fatality rate of less than 1 percent.

And the easily identifiable rash of monkeypox, as well as its earlier symptoms, could be considered beneficial. "One of the most challenging things about Covid has been that it can be spread asymptotically or pre-symptomatically, by people who have no idea that they're infected," Dr. Rasmussen said. "But with monkeypox it doesn't appear that there is any pre-symptomatic transmission."

Still, as the recent outbreak of cases has shown, there are plenty of opportunities to transmit monkeypox in the first few days of an infection, when symptoms are non-specific, Dr. Rasmussen said.

Do I need to worry about a rising threat?

The good news is that there is no evidence yet to suggest that the monkeypox virus has evolved or become more infectious. DNA viruses like monkeypox are generally [very stable and evolve extremely slowly](#) compared to RNA viruses, Dr. Sigal said. Scientists are sequencing the viruses from recent cases to

check for potential mutations, and will know soon if the infectiousness, severity or other characteristics have changed, he said. “But my expectation is that they will not be any different.”

Nevertheless, experts have some explanations for the recent increase in monkeypox cases. Research has shown that incidences of humans contracting viruses from contact with animals — also known as zoonotic spillovers — have become more common in recent decades. Increasing urbanization and deforestation means that humans and wild animals are coming into contact more often. Some animals that carry zoonotic viruses, like bats and rodents, have actually [become more abundant, while others have expanded or adapted their habitats](#) due to urban development and climate change.

“There’s more opportunities for relatively rare pathogens to get into new communities, find new hosts and travel to new places,” Dr. Rasmussen said.

Despite a brief pandemic lull, people are also [traveling more frequently](#) and to [more parts of the world](#) than they did just a decade ago. And while many of the new monkeypox cases are puzzling because patients did not have a history of direct travel to endemic countries in Africa, epidemiologists may uncover an indirect travel connection as they race to complete contact tracing in the coming weeks.

“The main risk for people these days with regards to viruses remains Covid,” Dr. Rasmussen said. “The good news there is that a lot of the same measures that will reduce your risk of Covid — social distancing, wearing masks in public spaces, practicing good hand hygiene and surface disinfection — will also reduce your risk of getting monkeypox.”

What is the treatment for monkeypox?

If you get sick, the treatment for monkeypox generally involves symptom management. Two antiviral drugs — cidofovir and tecovirimat — and an intravenous antibody treatment originally developed for smallpox [could be used to manage monkeypox as well](#), though they have only been studied in the lab and animal models.

There is also a vaccine that the Food and Drug Administration [approved in 2019](#), for people 18 and older, that protects against smallpox and monkeypox. But health officials stopped routinely vaccinating Americans against smallpox in 1972, when the disease was eradicated in the United States, and smallpox vaccines and treatments are now stockpiled mainly for [national security purposes](#).

“The sporadic monkeypox outbreaks that have occurred in the past haven’t been enough to warrant restarting the smallpox vaccination program,” Dr. Rasmussen said. Health officials in the U.S. and other countries may consider using some of the stockpiled vaccines in a “ring vaccination” strategy to prevent the spread of monkeypox from a patient to their health care providers and close contacts, she said.

If you have a new rash or are concerned about monkeypox, the C.D.C. urges people to contact their health care provider. The agency has asked doctors [to be on the alert](#) for signs of the telltale rash, and says potential monkeypox cases should be isolated and flagged to them. Doctors also should not limit their concerns to men who identify as gay or bisexual, or patients who have recently traveled to Central or West African countries.

“It’s really hard to put a timeline on when this will be contained, or how easy it will be,” Dr. Rasmussen said. “But we have the pharmacological tools, in combination with the classic isolation and quarantine procedures that have helped contain monkeypox outbreaks in the past. We can contain it again. The key is going to be identifying all the cases.”

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HEADLINE	05/23 Anaheim mayor resigns amid FBI probe
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/23/us/anaheim-mayor-resigns-harry-sidhu.html
GIST	Grappling with a federal public corruption investigation into the sale of Angel Stadium, Mayor Harry Sidhu of Anaheim, Calif., announced his resignation on Monday amid questions about whether business leaders in the state’s 10th-largest city have wielded undue influence.

Mr. Sidhu, a Republican elected in 2018 to lead the Southern California city of nearly 350,000 people, has not been charged with wrongdoing. But documentation supporting a federal search warrant accused him of acting against the city's interests while negotiating the planned \$320 million sale of the Major League Baseball stadium to the owner of the Los Angeles Angels, its home team.

In an affidavit filed this month, Brian Adkins, a special agent for the F.B.I., alleged that Mr. Sidhu shared confidential information with the team at least twice in anticipation of a "sizeable" donation toward his re-election this year. The affidavit did not include evidence that Mr. Sidhu had solicited such a contribution but cited surreptitiously recorded conversations in which the mayor detailed plans to ask the Angels for "at least" \$1 million in campaign help.

Mr. Sidhu's lawyer denied that in a statement.

"A fair and thorough investigation will prove that Mayor Harry Sidhu did not leak secret information," the lawyer, Paul S. Meyer, said, adding that the mayor "never asked for a political campaign contribution that was linked in any way to the negotiation process." He said the mayor's decision to leave his post effective Tuesday was an effort "to act in the best interests of Anaheim."

Last week, the rest of the City Council had asked Mr. Sidhu to resign.

Mr. Sidhu, a former city councilman, is the second Anaheim official this week to resign from a political post amid fallout from the investigation, which appears to have gained traction after 2019, when the F.B.I. arrested a local political consultant on charges of attempted bribery.

The consultant, Melahat Rafiei, also served on a city commission, sat on the Democratic National Committee and was an officer in the state Democratic Party. She resigned from those posts over the weekend, writing on social media that she, too, was innocent of wrongdoing.

The charges against Ms. Rafiei were ultimately dismissed. According to the social media post and the federal affidavit, she then went to work as a confidential informant for the F.B.I., wearing a wire during meetings with Southern California city officials in a federal inquiry into a collection of local officials, business leaders and political operatives who exerted political influence in Anaheim.

In the social media post, she wrote that she had intended to "uncover corruption among Republican operatives."

The investigation also has ensnared the former chief executive of the Anaheim Chamber of Commerce. The executive, Todd Ament, was charged last week with lying about his assets to a mortgage lender in an attempt to use the chamber's money to qualify for a loan to buy a vacation home.

Mike Lyster, a spokesman for Anaheim, said the City Council would meet Tuesday to discuss the future of the stadium deal, an issue that raises broader questions about the future of a city known for its tourist attractions — Disneyland chief among them — and professional sports teams.

Right now, the city owns what Mr. Lyster described as an aging stadium, famously marked by a giant red "A" encircled by a halo. The stadium is surrounded by a sea of concrete, a parking lot that a company run by Arte Moreno, the owner of the Angels, planned to develop with homes, restaurants, hotels and shops.

The investigation could impede the deal. In December, California officials found that the sale violated a state law requiring local governments to prioritize surplus land for affordable housing. Last month, Anaheim and the state agreed to resolve the matter by having the city pay a \$96 million fine. But Attorney General Rob Bonta has since asked a judge to pause the resolution.

Mr. Lyster said that if the deal falls through, it could affect whether the Angels stay in Anaheim.

	“Will this be a pause? Will this be a reset?” Mr. Lyster said. “That’s the direction we need from our City Council.”
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HEADLINE	05/23 Philadelphia reinstates masks in schools
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/23/world/covid-19-mandates-vaccine-cases?name=stylncoronavirus&region=hub&block=storyline_live_updates_block_recirc&action=click&pgtype=LegacyCollection#philadelphia-schools-masks
GIST	<p>When students and teachers in Philadelphia return to school on Monday, they will have to wear masks once again, as coronavirus cases continue to rise — the latest twist in the city’s evolving approach to masking.</p> <p>William R. Hite Jr., the superintendent of the Philadelphia School District, announced on Friday that “all school district students and staff will be required to wear their masks during the school and work day and while riding on school buses and vans” until further notice.</p> <p>The superintendent emphasized that the district was remaining flexible to adjust to new threats from Covid-19.</p> <p>“As we’ve learned since the pandemic began, the coronavirus continues to evolve and so too will our response to it,” he said in a statement.</p> <p>And that is not new to the city. Last month, Philadelphia became the first major American city to reinstate an indoor mask mandate in response to rising coronavirus cases, only to have its health department decide four days later to lift the order because of improving conditions.</p> <p>Bringing back a mask order would seem to be in line with federal recommendations. Last week, Dr. Rochelle P. Walensky, the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, warned that a third of Americans live in areas where the threat of Covid is so high that they should consider wearing a mask in indoor public settings. Dr. Walensky cited the spread of the virus and the rise in hospitalizations across the country. The United States is averaging more than 100,000 known cases per day for the first time since February.</p> <p>Coronavirus cases in the Philadelphia area are trending in the same direction as in the nation. Philadelphia County, which includes the city, most recently had an average of 434 new cases reported per day, a 42 percent increase from the average two weeks earlier, according to a New York Times database. It had 209 new hospitalizations reported per day, a 29 percent jump from the average two weeks earlier.</p> <p>Other cities are taking a wait-and-see approach. In New York City, face masks have been optional in public schools since March. Last week, Mayor Eric Adams said that in spite of the city entering the high alert level for the coronavirus because of fast-spreading Omicron subvariants, he had no plans of bringing back any mask mandates for now.</p> <p>“If every variant that comes, we move into shutdown thoughts, we move into panicking, we’re not going to function as a city,” Mr. Adams said at a news conference on Wednesday.</p> <p>Asked if he would reinstitute a mask mandate for schools, Mr. Adams replied: “No.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 Death rates rose most amid pandemic?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/05/23/health/covid-death-toll-world.html
GIST	The United States had more deaths above normal levels during the pandemic than most other wealthy countries, according to data released by the World Health Organization this month. U.S. deaths were 15

percent above normal — a number surpassed by only four other large countries in the same income group: Chile, the Czech Republic, Poland and Romania.

Globally, many poorer and developing countries fared worse than the wealthiest ones, but deaths in the United States rose even higher than in several countries with far fewer resources, including Argentina and the Philippines.

Throughout the pandemic, the United States and other wealthy countries have had access to the lion's share of lifesaving supplies such as [vaccines](#), [antiviral treatments](#), [masks and testing kits](#). While most rich countries also have a relatively older and more vulnerable segment of their population, they also had access to [economic support and policies](#).

Some of the countries with the largest increase in death rates during the first two years of the pandemic were those in the upper-middle-income groups: Ecuador, Mexico and [Peru](#). But many countries with the lowest income — including most African countries — are not included in the charts because their data is less reliable.

Some countries struggled more than others to accurately count pandemic-related deaths. W.H.O. figures show by just how much. The global toll is [more than twice the number of Covid-19 deaths](#) reported in official government calculations worldwide.

In the wealthiest countries, the gap between reported Covid-19 deaths and estimated total deaths above normal was small, perhaps because of the relatively lower number of deaths as well as existing infrastructure around death reporting.

But among upper-middle and low or lower-middle-income countries, the number of deaths above normal estimated by the W.H.O. was often many times larger than the number of reported deaths.

Across the world, about 13 percent — or 15 million more people — died than expected in the first two years of the pandemic.

These latest estimates by the W.H.O. are what many scientists say are the most reliable gauge of the [total impact of the pandemic](#) so far. The figures — often called excess deaths — measure the difference between the number of people who died in 2020 and 2021 and the number of people who would have been expected to die during that time if the pandemic had not happened. They include those who died from Covid-19 without having been tested as well as from other preventable illnesses when hospitals were overwhelmed with virus patients.

In countries like Australia, China and Japan, the number of deaths in 2020 and 2021 estimated by the W.H.O. was actually lower than normal. The W.H.O. said that some countries may have seen decreased mortality from other causes as a result of Covid-19 control measures. And because the W.H.O. relied on the death and population statistics reported in part by government agencies, some numbers could be underestimated in countries with poor reporting.

Peru, which saw the highest deaths above normal among all large countries, has been a [hot spot for the coronavirus](#) since the summer of 2020.

In India, deaths above normal peaked in the summer of 2021, when a wave of cases [strained the country's health resources](#).

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HEADLINE	05/23 Study: many graduate programs are 'scams'
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/graduate-programs-masters-degree-scams-negative-return-on-investment/
GIST	Some 3 million Americans will enroll in graduate programs this year — only to work toward degrees that often aren't worth the time or money, according to an education policy analyst.

Many undergraduates earn their bachelor's degrees and go straight to graduate school in hopes of gaining a new degree or skills that will make them more attractive to prospective employers.

"The reason people go makes sense. They go to get a good job and make more money," said James Murphy, senior policy analyst at advocacy group Education Reform Now.

But [recent research](#) shows that 40% of masters programs in the U.S. have no positive return.

"If you take in the cost of attending and the time spent not working, what you get out of that master's degree doesn't even pay for itself," Murphy told CBS News.

In some cases, they even have a negative return on investment — meaning degree holders spend more on graduate school than they can reasonably expect to earn later on.

"You end up making less money by getting this degree. So that's pretty bad," Murphy added. That's compounded by the fact that some 60% of degree seekers take out loans to pay for graduate school programs, and end up saddled with student loan debt.

Murphy said the federal government issues loans recklessly to students who end up carrying more debt than they can pay off. Meanwhile, universities get rich from tuition fees.

"It's the universities who are seeing giant piles of money out there and grabbing it," Murphy said.

In the past decade alone, roughly 9,000 new master's degree programs have sprouted. But new different career types have not.

"This is essentially universities seeing the money that's out there and getting it," Murphy said.

He urged students to consider whether or not a master's degree makes sense before they enroll in a program. First, ask yourself why you want to get a master's degree.

"If your answer is to make more money, get a better job, and that's your only answer, it's probably not a great idea," he said.

On the other hand, if you can point to specific data about the program you're interested in, and the marketable skills or credentials it develops that can lead to a higher-paying job, it might be worth the investment. For instance, at many public schools, teachers with master's degrees in education earn more than those without them.

"If you're going to get that return, it makes sense," Murphy said.

Also visit sites like the U.S. Department of Education-run [College Scorecard](#), which compares the cost and value of higher-education institutions across the U.S., he suggested.

Be leery of programs that promise you only a great network and better communication skills, Murphy said. "Find out what actually you'll be able to do in a year or two that you can't do now."

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HEADLINE	05/23 US firms still in Russia doing business
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-businesses-still-in-russia-ukraine-sbarro-hard-rock-cafe-mcdonalds-starbucks/
GIST	The Starbucks logo and McDonald's Golden Arches are being dismantled in Russia as the coffee and fast-food chains both withdraw from the country over the war in Ukraine . But Russians are still getting their fill

of American fare like burgers and pizza, as Hard Rock Cafe and Sbarro are among the more than two dozen U.S. corporations that continue to do business as usual in Russia.

Twenty-seven U.S.-based companies are defying calls to exit or curtail their activities in Russia, according to a running [tally](#) by Yale University management professor Jeffrey Sonnenfeld and his research team.

While Starbucks and McDonald's have both announced their complete withdrawals from Russia in recent days, Hard Rock continues to operate its Hard Rock Cafes in Moscow and St. Petersburg, Russia. The company, acquired by the Seminole Tribe of Florida in 2007, did not respond to requests for comment.

Another purveyor of fast food, U.S. pizza chain **Sbarro**, is also staying put. Operating Russia since 1997, the privately held company signed a new franchise deal in the country in 2017. It has [partnered](#) with Horeca Band Group and plans to open more than 300 Sbarro restaurants in Russia by 2027. It did not respond to a request for comment.

It's not only food chains that are "digging in," according to Sonnenfeld. The owner of online dating services Match.com and its Tinder unit continues to do business in Russia, with executives at the dating company saying in an earnings call earlier this month that it expects to lose about \$10 million in revenue every quarter as long as the Russian war in Ukraine continues.

"European performance was impacted by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which reduced revenue in Russia, Ukraine and several other nearby countries," said Gary Swidler, Match's chief operating and financial officer.

Dallas, Texas-based-Match Group did not respond to a request for comment.

Dating app Bumble made a different decision. In March, the social networking platform [said](#) it was ceasing operations in Russia and removing its apps from the Apple App Store and Google Play Store in Russia and Belarus.

Still in Russia

Here's a rundown of the American companies that are getting an "F" grade from Sonnenfeld for their decisions regarding their operations in Russia.

- **Aimbridge Hospitality.** The Plano, Texas-based hotel management company operates more than 1,400 properties in 49 states and 20 countries, including ongoing operations in Russia.
- **Align Technology.** The Tempe, Arizona-based medical device maker this month [referenced](#) the conflict in Ukraine as among the factors that could "adversely impact our commercial and research and development activities inside and outside of Russia."
- **Amdocs.** Founded in Israel, the information technology company is headquartered in Jersey City, New Jersey, and is "still cooperating with Russian partners," according to Sonnenfeld. The company called its exposure to Russia and Ukraine immaterial and roughly 1% of revenue, CEO Shuky Sheffer said in an earnings call on May 11. Amdocs complies with applicable U.S. sanctions on Russia and has stopped new sales of its products and services in the country, he said.
- **Amgen.** The Thousand Oaks, California-based drugmaker opened an office in Moscow in 2006, and the company's activities [currently](#) cover the entire territory of the Russian Federation, from Kaliningrad to Kamchatka, according to its website.
- **Avaya.** The information technology company is still supporting its Russian partners. The military conflict, sanctions and export controls imposed by the U.S. and other countries "severely limit our ability to conduct commercial activities with Russian companies, organizations and individuals on the U.S.," the company [said](#) in a regulatory filing. It expects to lose \$45 million in anticipated revenue in Russia this year, and another \$15 million as other countries shift priorities because of the war.
- **Cloudflare.** The San Francisco security and web performance services provider is complying with sanctions, but decided against terminating its services inside Russia. "Russia needs more internet access, not less," Matthew Prince, the company's co-founder and CEO, [wrote](#) in March. "We

believe removing our services from Russia would do more harm than good," a spokesperson told CBS MoneyWatch in an email.

- **Donaldson Co.** The Bloomington, Minnesota-based manufacturer of industrial air-filtration systems continues sales to Russia.
- **Fleetcor.** The Atlanta-based provider of payment services for transportation companies has about 600 employees in Russia, and continues to conduct business as usual.
- **Forever Living Products.** The privately held multilevel marketing company based in Scottsdale, Arizona, is still operating in Russia.
- **Huntsman Corp.** The Woodlands, Texas-based maker of industrial chemicals is still operating in Russia.
- **International Paper.** The Memphis, Tennessee-based company in March [said](#) it might sell its 50% [stake](#) in a major Russian forest products company, but would continue operations in the country.
- **IQVIA.** The Danbury, Connecticut-based provider of medical analytics is still operating and actively hiring in Russia.
- **Kemin Industries.** The Des Moines, Iowa-based supplier of feed additives [formed](#) a Russian subsidiary in 2016 and is still operating in the country.
- **Koch Industries** is still operating in Russia. Guardian Glass, a subsidiary of the Wichita, Kansas, industrial conglomerate, is [working with its local managers in Russia](#) "to find an exit strategy" that also ensures the safety of their roughly 600 employees, Koch President Dave Robertson told employees in a [memo](#) last month.
- **Medtronic.** The Minneapolis, Minnesota-based medical device company continues to operate a subsidiary in Russia. The company in April [condemned](#) the Russian invasion of Ukraine and said it would continue to support essential business activities that supply its life-saving and sustaining products. The company is not making new investments or starting new clinical trials in the country.
- **Paccar.** The Bellevue, Washington, truck maker is still active in Russia. The company has suspended truck and parts sales in Russia and Belarus to comply with international sanctions, and manages export sales to the country through independent dealers and a third-party-owned warehouse, it said in a regulatory [filing](#). It sold 2,500 trucks into Russia and Belarus last year.
- **Riot Games.** The company is still operating and selling products in Russia.
- **Stryker.** The Kalamazoo, Michigan-based orthopedics device maker continues sales and imports to Russia.
- **Tenneco.** The Lake Forest, Illinois-based supplier of automotive components is still operating in Russia. It [opened](#) a manufacturing facility in Togliatti, Russia, in 2003 and an [emissions plant](#) in St. Petersburg, Russia, four years later.
- **TGI Friday's.** The company is still operating in Russia. The Dallas, Texas-based restaurant chain in March [said](#) it would donate franchisee fees from its restaurants in Russia to Ukraine relief efforts.
- **Titan International.** One of the largest manufacturers of off-road tires and wheels, the Quincy, Illinois-based company is still operating in Russia. The company halted investment in its Russian operations and is running its southwest Russia facility at reduced capacity to comply with international sanctions, the company said in a regulatory [filing](#). Its Russian operation represents about 5% of consolidated global sales for the first quarter ending March 31.
- **Tom Ford.** The New York-based fashion house opened its first store in Russia in 2011 and is still operating in the country.
- **Valve Corp.** The Bellevue, Washington-based entertainment software and technology company behind the Steam gaming platform is still providing services to Russia.
- **Zimmer Biomet.** The Warsaw, Indiana-based medical device maker continues sales in Russia. The company in March [stated](#) that it had customers, distributors and employees in both Ukraine and Russia, and was focused on maintaining contact and offering support to all. The company condemned the invasion of Ukraine in an emailed statement to CBS MoneyWatch. "We are presently continuing to supply hospital and care teams in Russia," with a portion of profits from the sale of its products in Russia going to Ukraine relief efforts, a spokesperson stated.

HEADLINE	05/23 Belarus president deflects consequences
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/belarusian-president-lukashenko-reveals-dream-of-new-world-order-in-russias-war?ref=home
GIST	<p>Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko delivered a bizarre letter to the United Nations Secretary General António Guterres arguing that the UN and other world leaders should essentially let Russia do as it pleases in Ukraine, and deflecting blame for the consequences of the war, as Russian forces continue to wage war in the country for the 89th day.</p> <p>He urged other governments to stop providing weapons as the war in Ukraine carries on, attempting to paint the supply of defensive weapons as provocative behavior, ignoring the fact that Russia started the war in Ukraine.</p> <p>“Together and each in our role, we can do a lot today: refrain from the supply of weapons,” Lukashenko said, adding all countries can refrain “from information warfare and any provocations, from inflating hate speech in the media, from encouraging racism and discrimination based on national, cultural, linguistic and religious affiliation, from legalization and direction of mercenaries.”</p> <p>Lukashenko urged the Secretary General to consider instituting a “new world order” in which all members of the international community have “security guarantees,” because it would be in the UN's interest to “prevent the conflict from becoming protracted with devastating consequences.”</p> <p>The Belarusian president, who has been aiding Putin’s war in Ukraine since even before it began—with senior U.S. officials warning that Belarus appears to be operating hand-in-hand with Russia—also sought to make Belarus look like a misunderstood victim, not an instigator.</p> <p>“Today, the world, unfortunately, forgets that Belarusians have never been a threat to any of their neighbors,” he said, lamenting the sanctions imposed on Russia. “We are not aggressors, as some states try to present us. Belarus has never been the initiator of any wars or conflicts... The conflict in Ukraine, its root causes, and the current Western sanctions against Russia are already having their devastating consequences...”</p> <p>“We are not traitors,” Lukashenko added. “Honesty and integrity in relationships are important to us.”</p> <p>Russian President Vladimir Putin has also appeared to try to brush off blame for the war in Ukraine and its consequences; Putin joked Monday during a meeting with Lukashenko that he would have to talk with western officials about their claims that he is to blame for all the world’s economic problems following the invasion in Ukraine.</p> <p>Lukashenko also blamed other countries, not Russia, for kickstarting the war, claiming that they ignored Russian needs, echoing earlier complaints from Putin about Ukraine and NATO acting aggressively towards Russia.</p> <p>“The unwillingness of Western countries to work on strengthening common and indivisible security, their disregard for legitimate interests and ignoring the concerns of other partners, primarily Russia, first resulted in trade, economic and information wars, and then provoked a hot conflict on the territory of Ukraine,” Lukashenko said. “The security architecture in Europe has failed.”</p> <p>Their remarks come as Russia nears three months at war with Ukraine, and just a week after Putin and Lukashenko scolded their allies for not backing Russia enough in the war effort in Ukraine, urging them to step up efforts to galvanize support on the world stage for Russia.</p> <p>Peace negotiations have been stalled between Russia and Ukraine for weeks now, and Lukashenko urged the countries to come together and try again to discuss a path forward.</p>

“Belarus calls on the countries of the world to unite and prevent the regional conflict in Europe from escalating into a full-scale world war,” Lukashenko said. “In 2022, it was Belarus that was able to initiate negotiations between the Ukrainian and Russian delegations on our territory.”

But the Belarusian president’s effort to paint Belarus and Russia as the wronged parties and as one of a few willing to hold peace talks, of course, is revisionist history at best. Belarus is not the only country calling for talks to take place—Zelensky indicated talks could resume if Russian forces didn’t kill the Ukrainian forces defending the iron and steel plant, Azovstal, in Mariupol.

For now, Russia's plan forward in Ukraine isn't entirely clear, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said Monday.

"In terms of what his overall strategy is, that's unknown," Austin said.

Lukashenko’s remarks that resuming peace negotiations would be welcome, of course, glosses over some of the difficulties of actually cementing a resolution to the war. Ukrainian government officials have been issuing warnings in the past several days that the country is not interested in a ceasefire agreement that would give up territory to Russia.

Andriy Yermak, a top adviser to Ukrainian President Zelensky, said Sunday the war will only end when Ukraine has control over all of its territory.

“The war must end with the complete restoration of Ukrainian territorial integrity and sovereignty,” [Yermak said in a tweet](#). “That is, our victory. Our common victory with the civilized world.”

Anything less than that, or any effort to provide concessions to Russia, would only rally the Russian war effort, according to Ukraine’s top negotiator for peace, Mikhail Podolyak.

“Any concession to Russia is not a path to peace, but a war postponed for several years. Ukraine trades neither its sovereignty nor territories and Ukrainians living on them,” [Podolyak said](#) Saturday on Twitter. [Maj. Gen. Kyrylo Budanov](#), Ukraine’s top military intelligence official, indicated in an interview with *The Wall Street Journal* that Ukraine is interested in regaining all the territory lost to Russia since 2014, including Crimea.

Ukraine is not alone in insisting on a full Russian retreat. Poland’s President, Andrzej Duda, agreed in recent days that Russia ought to fully withdraw as well.

In the meantime, though, the war shows no signs of reaching an end point. [Russian forces continue to attack](#) Severodonetsk in eastern Ukraine in what Luhansk Governor Serhiy Gaidai said was an attempt to systematically destroy the city.

And Putin, though he acknowledged the sanctions have been difficult to deal with, suggested that Moscow will be able to withstand their consequences for some time.

"Despite all the difficulties, the Russian economy is withstanding the impact of the sanctions, and withstanding it quite well," [Putin said](#) at his meeting with Lukashenko in Sochi.

Ukrainian officials look dug in on their position to resist Russian attacks as well. Ukraine’s Verkhovna Rada approved Zelensky’s request to extend [martial law](#) for another several months as Ukrainians bear down against the Russian onslaught.

And contrary to Lukashenko’s wishes that foreign nations stop helping Ukraine defend itself against Russia’s attacks in the war, [foreign leaders are continuing to provide aid and weaponry](#) to Ukraine to keep fighting Russia off. Twenty nations announced new aid packages just Monday following a Ukraine Contact Group meeting, according to the Pentagon.

HEADLINE	05/23 China's bet homegrown mRNA vaccine
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/chinas-bet-homegrown-mrna-vaccines-holds-back-nation-84927708
GIST	<p>TAIPEI, Taiwan -- China is trying to navigate its biggest coronavirus outbreak without a tool it could have adopted many months ago, the kind of vaccines that have proven to offer the best protection against the worst outcomes from COVID-19.</p> <p>As early as the spring of 2020 a Chinese pharmaceutical company, Fosun Pharma, reached an agreement to distribute — and eventually manufacture — the mRNA vaccine made by Pfizer and BioNTech. It still has not been cleared in mainland China, despite being authorized for use by separate authorities in Hong Kong and Macao.</p> <p>Now health experts say that delay — a result of putting politics and national pride above public health — could lead to avoidable coronavirus deaths and deeper economic losses because whole cities would be locked down to insulate the country's unprotected population.</p> <p>“The biggest issue is about the delay of the reopening,” said Xi Chen, a health economist at Yale University's School of Public Health. “The consequences will be huge, the supply chain disruption, the disruption to all kinds of service sectors.”</p> <p>Studies have consistently shown that vaccination with mRNA vaccines made by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna offer the best protection against hospitalization and death from COVID-19. Chinese vaccines made with older technology proved fairly effective against the original strain of the virus, but much less so against more recent variants.</p> <p>As this evidence became clearer, even countries that initially used Chinese vaccines and some other less effective Western-made vaccines have turned to mRNA vaccines for booster shots and new vaccinations.</p> <p>Not China. Regulators have not publicly said why they have not acted — the mRNA vaccines are authorized in much of the world and have proven safe and effective in hundreds of millions of people. But a Chinese health official and another person directly involved in the negotiations told The Associated Press that authorities have held back because they want to master the technology in China and not depend on foreign suppliers. Both spoke on condition of anonymity, given the sensitive nature of the issue.</p> <p>For more than a year, the approach seemed defensible. The country was able to keep the virus at bay better than any other large nation with its strict "zero COVID" approach that isolates infected people and locks down communities when infections pop up.</p> <p>But now, the highly transmissible omicron variant is testing that strategy, requiring ever wider and longer lockdowns that are taking a greater economic and human toll. While other countries are able to operate close to normal because their people are protected by vaccination or previous infection, China is left with only its lockdown strategy to avoid huge numbers of hospitalizations and deaths.</p> <p>China may be changing its mind. The Communist Party-owned Global Times newspaper reported last month that Fosun Pharma is still working with health authorities on its approval and Shanghai authorities recently issued new policies that could allow the import of COVID-19 vaccines. Fosun, based in Shanghai, did not respond to questions about the announcement.</p> <p>China's National Health Commission directed questions to the country's drug regulator, the National Medical Products Administration. That agency did not respond to a faxed request for comment.</p> <p>In the meantime, hopes for a Chinese-developed mRNA vaccine center on Abogen Biosciences, a startup founded in 2019 by Bo Ying, an American-trained scientist who once worked for Moderna.</p>

The company has partnered with more established companies in the country such as Walvax, a private company founded in 2001, and the Academy of Military Medical Sciences, the military's medical research facility. Abogen has raised more than \$1.7 billion since 2020.

The company's vaccine candidate succeeded in eliciting an immune response in a small, preliminary test in humans designed to evaluate safety, according to a study published in the journal Lancet Microbe.

The results were "promising," said Dr. Vineeta Bal, who studies immune systems at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research in Pune, India, although she said that a direct comparison of the immune response the shot triggered with the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines would have helped scientists better evaluate its performance.

But large studies that are needed to show whether the shot works to prevent infections or symptoms have not been completed. Abogen did not respond to requests for an interview.

Even if the studies can be completed and the vaccine proves effective, manufacturing the millions of doses required will be a challenge, experts say. Abogen built a manufacturing facility in December 2020 with a projected capacity of up to 120 million doses a year.

Manufacturing that vaccine and ensuring quality at scale will be a difficult hurdle to clear because mRNA is still a new technology, said Scott Wheelwright, chief operating officer at BioInno Bioscience, a Chinese biopharmaceutical contract manufacturer who has held conversations with Abogen.

In the meantime, Chen, the Yale health policy expert, said the Chinese government should better protect its elderly population by both approving the Pfizer vaccine and encouraging booster shots.

Using a Chinese phrase that means "giving up completely," Chen said the change from "zero COVID" does not have to be all or nothing. "It doesn't have to be tang ping or sticking to zero COVID," Chen said. "I don't think there are only two solutions, and we can stick to a middle ground."

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HEADLINE	05/24 Sweden: 5th Covid shot to 65 and older
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/sweden-5th-covid-19-shot-people-65-pregnant-84929370
GIST	<p>STOCKHOLM -- Sweden is recommending a fifth COVID-19 vaccine dose for people with an increased risk of becoming seriously ill, including pregnant women and anyone aged 65 and over, authorities said Tuesday, adding that the country must "be prepared for an increased spread during the upcoming autumn and winter season."</p> <p>"The vaccine is our strongest tool for preventing serious illness and death," Swedish Social Affairs Minister Lena Hallengren said, adding the pandemic is not over.</p> <p>As of Sept. 1, Sweden recommends that another booster shot is given to people aged 65 and older and people over 18 in the risk groups. The Swedish Public Health Agency said the latter includes pregnant women, people with weakened immune systems and people with heart and lung disease.</p> <p>"In general, the risk of serious illness is assessed as low for adults under the age of 65 who have been vaccinated with three doses, but the risk increases with age and varies within the group," agency chief Karin Tegmark Wisell said.</p> <p>For most of the pandemic, Sweden stood out among European nations for its comparatively hands-off response. It never went into lockdown or closed businesses, largely relying instead on individual responsibility.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/24 Heavy fighting rages Ukraine Donbas region
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SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/russian-soldier-life-killing-ukrainian-civilian-84926626
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine -- Heavy fighting was raging in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region, where Russian forces have stepped up their bombardments beyond the frontlines, Britain's Defense Ministry said Tuesday.</p> <p>Moscow faces stiff Ukrainian resistance to its effort to encircle the area around the city of Sievierodonetsk and consolidate Russian control of the Luhansk region — the main focus but not the only Russian effort in the campaign to capture the Donbas, the ministry said in the update posted on Twitter.</p> <p>Cities not under Russian control were constantly shelled, and one Ukrainian official said Russian forces targeted civilians trying to flee.</p> <p>Russia is bent on capturing the eastern industrial heartland of coal mines and factories and has made some localized gains, the ministry said in its daily intelligence briefing, but Ukraine's long-established Joint Force Operation likely retains effective command and control of that front.</p> <p>To the north in Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv, residents lined up for rations of tea, sugar, pasta and cereal, holding out plastic bags to receive cups of flour and other supplies. An aid worker said many had fled the city while it was under siege and returned, lacking a regular income and the means to feed their families without help.</p> <p>Kherson, a region bordering Donetsk to the east and Crimea to the south, was taken by Russian forces early in the war. An official there said the region's pro-Kremlin administration will ask Moscow to set up a military base there.</p> <p>"We will be asking for it, the entire population is interested in it. It is vitally important and will become a security guarantee for the region and its residents," said Kirill Stremousov, deputy head of the Russia-installed administration in Kherson.</p> <p>Ukrainian officials have speculated Russia plans to stage a referendum in the region to declare its independence, similar to ones held in Donetsk and Luhansk regions in 2014. Moscow recognized the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk republics two days before invading Ukraine, using that as a pretext to send troops to its ex-Soviet neighbor.</p> <p>Stremousov denied such plans earlier this month and said the region will ask the Kremlin to make it part of Russia instead. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said it is up to the people of Kherson to decide how and where they want to live.</p> <p>Meeting in Tokyo with fellow leaders in the Indo-Pacific security coalition known as the Quad, President Joe Biden said Tuesday that Russia's war in Ukraine had brought a "dark hour in our shared history."</p> <p>Global defense leaders on Monday agreed to send more advanced weapons to Ukraine, including a Harpoon launcher and missiles to protect its coast, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told reporters.</p> <p>Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called for "maximum" sanctions against Russia, with an embargo on Russian oil, a complete cutoff of trade and withdrawal of foreign companies, in a video address to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.</p> <p>Later, in his evening address to the nation, Zelenskyy said four missiles had killed 87 people last week in the town of Desna, 55 kilometers (34 miles) north of Kyiv, in one of the deadliest single strikes in the war.</p> <p>Also Monday, a Ukrainian court sentenced a captured Russian soldier, Sgt. Vadim Shishimarin, 21, to the maximum penalty of life in prison for killing a civilian. He was sentenced for shooting a 62-year-old man in the head in a village in the northeastern Sumy region in the opening days of the war. His attorney indicated he may appeal.</p>

Mary Ellen O’Connell, an expert on international law at the University of Notre Dame, said putting Shishimarin on trial could prove “extremely detrimental to Ukrainian soldiers in the hands of Russia.” Russia may decide to hold “show trials” of Ukrainians to boost the morale of its own soldiers and spread disinformation, she said.

Russian authorities have threatened to hold trials of some captured Ukrainians — namely, fighters who held out at Mariupol’s shattered steel plant, the last stronghold of resistance in the strategic southern port city. They surrendered and were taken prisoner last week, at which point Moscow claimed the capture of Mariupol was complete.

Ukrainian prosecutors are investigating thousands of potential war crimes. Russian forces in Mariupol bombed a theater where civilians were sheltering and struck a maternity hospital. In the wake of Moscow’s withdrawal from around Kyiv weeks ago, mass graves were discovered and streets were strewn with bodies in towns such as Bucha.

Russian authorities have seized upon the far-right origins of one of the regiments there, calling the Azov Regiment’s fighters “Nazis” and the country’s top prosecutor has asked Moscow’s Supreme Court to designate the regiment as a terrorist organization. Russia’s main investigative body said it intends to interrogate the Mariupol defenders to “identify the nationalists” and determine whether they were involved in crimes against civilians.

Family members of the Ukrainian fighters have pleaded for their eventual return to Ukraine as part of a prisoner swap.

In a rare public expression of opposition to the war from Russia’s elite, veteran diplomat Boris Bondarev quit his post at the U.N. office at Geneva and sent a letter denouncing the war and saying he had never been so ashamed of his country.

Bondarev told The Associated Press: “It is intolerable what my government is doing now.”

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HEADLINE	05/23 Turkey threatens new incursion into Syria
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/turkeys-erdogan-threatens-incursion-syria-84916472
GIST	<p>ANKARA, Turkey -- Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan threatened Monday to launch a new military operation in Syria to secure Turkey's southern border.</p> <p>Speaking following a Cabinet meeting, Erdogan said the aim of the operation would be resume Turkish efforts to create a 30-kilometer (20 mile) safe zone along its border with Syria.</p> <p>“We will soon take new steps regarding the incomplete portions of the project we started on the 30-km deep safe zone we established along our southern border,” Erdogan said.</p> <p>Erdogan did not provide further details but said the operation would begin after Turkey’s military, intelligence and security forces complete their preparations.</p> <p>Turkish forces have launched three major incursions into northern Syria, taking control of areas along the border in a bid to secure its frontier from threats from the Islamic State group and Kurdish militia group, the People’s Protection Units, or YPG.</p> <p>Turkey views the group as an extension of the banned Kurdistan Workers’ Party, or PKK which is listed as a terror group by Turkey, the United States and the European Union. The PKK has waged an insurgency against Turkey since 1984. Tens of thousands of people have died in the conflict.</p> <p>Erdogan’s comments come at a time when Turkey is objecting to Sweden and Finland’s membership in the NATO alliance, citing the two countries alleged support for the PKK and other groups that Turkey</p>

	views as terrorists, as well as their decision to impose restrictions on military sales to Turkey following Ankara's incursion into Syria in 2019.
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HEADLINE	05/23 DOJ revises use-of-force by agents
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/23/us/politics/justice-department-excessive-force.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Attorney General Merrick B. Garland has revised rules governing the use of force by law enforcement agencies overseen by the Justice Department, requiring federal agents to intervene when they see officials using excessive force or mistreating people in custody.</p> <p>The rule change was circulated on Friday and posted on the department's website on Monday — two days before the second anniversary of the death of George Floyd, who died beneath the knee of a Minneapolis police officer as other officers looked on.</p> <p>“It is the policy of the Department of Justice to value and preserve human life,” Mr. Garland wrote in the four-page memo. “Officers may use only the force that is objectively reasonable to effectively gain control of an incident, while protecting the safety of the officer and others.”</p> <p>The changes represent the first revision of the department's use-of-force policy in 18 years. It now requires officers to “recognize and act upon the affirmative duty to intervene to prevent or stop, as appropriate, any officer from engaging in excessive force or any other use of force that violates the Constitution, other federal laws or department policies on the reasonable use of force.”</p> <p>The existence of the memo was reported earlier by The Washington Post.</p> <p>The new rules will apply to the Justice Department's entire work force, including agents and officers with the F.B.I., the Drug Enforcement Administration, the U.S. Marshals Service, the Federal Bureau of Prisons and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.</p> <p>The department does not have the authority to impose the requirements on local police forces or sheriff's departments, though the Biden administration intends for the document to be used as a template for localities.</p> <p>The use-of-force rules, rewritten in consultation with civil rights groups after the Floyd killing, also draw heavily from the National Consensus Policy on Use of Force, which was drafted by 11 major law enforcement groups representing federal, state and local law enforcement officers.</p> <p>Other provisions include prohibitions against firing a weapon at a moving vehicle with the sole purpose of stopping it, and discharging a warning shot “outside of the prison context.”</p> <p>The new memo is far more explicit and prescriptive than prior guidelines on the rights and physical well-being of people pursued in connection with crimes or taken into federal custody.</p> <p>Federal officers not only have a responsibility to stop acts of police brutality, but also now have “the affirmative duty to request and/or render medical aid, as appropriate, where needed,” according to the guidelines.</p> <p>The Department of Homeland Security, which is not governed by the Justice Department, enacted a similar rule in 2018, advising its employees to seek medical attention “as soon as practicable following a use of force and the end of any perceived public safety threat.”</p> <p>The Justice Department memo is one in a series of actions taken by the Biden administration in the wake of the death of Mr. Floyd and several other episodes of police brutality.</p>

	<p>In April 2021, Mr. Garland announced a wide-ranging investigation into the patterns, practices and culture of the Minneapolis Police Department after the former officer Derek Chauvin was found guilty of murdering Mr. Floyd.</p> <p>“Nothing can fill the void the loved ones of George Floyd have felt since his death,” Mr. Garland said at the time. “My heart goes out to them and to all those who have experienced similar loss.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 Powerful US artillery enters Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/23/world/europe/us-ukraine-howitzers.html
GIST	<p>POKROVSK, Ukraine — Camouflaged in a heap of branches cut from nearby trees, the weapon that Ukraine hopes will make a critical difference in its war with Russia is all but invisible from more than a few feet away.</p> <p>Soon, a single round shoots out with a boom and a howling, metallic shriek as it sails toward Russian positions.</p> <p>It is the American-made M777 howitzer. It shoots farther, moves faster and is hidden more easily, and it’s what the Ukrainian military has been waiting for.</p> <p>Three months into the war in Ukraine, the first M777s — the most lethal weapons the West has provided so far — are now deployed in combat in Ukraine’s east. Their arrival has buoyed Ukraine’s hopes of achieving artillery superiority at least in some frontline areas, a key step toward military victories in a war now fought mostly on flat, open steppe at long ranges.</p> <p>The American howitzers are chunky machines of steel and titanium swathed in hydraulic hoses and perched on four braces that fold up and down. They have already fired hundreds of rounds since arriving around May 8, destroying armored vehicles and killing Russian soldiers, Ukrainian commanders say.</p> <p>“This weapon brings us closer to victory,” Col. Roman Kachur, commander of the 55th Artillery Brigade, whose unit was the first unit to deploy the weapon, said in an interview. Mixing confidence with an implicit plea for more weapons, he added: “With every modern weapon, every precise weapon, we get closer to victory.”</p> <p>How close remains unclear, Western military analysts say. The arrival of the new weapons is no guarantee of success, as the Russians continue to engage in fierce fighting in the eastern Donbas region. Much depends on numbers.</p> <p>“Artillery is very much the business of quantity,” Michael Kofman, the director of Russian studies at C.N.A., a research institute in Arlington, Va., said in a telephone interview. “The Russians are one of the largest artillery armies you can face.”</p> <p>The United States said weeks ago it would provide the howitzers, but their use in combat has so far been mostly hinted at in online videos posted, mostly anonymously, by soldiers. On Sunday, the military provided The New York Times a tour of a gun line in eastern Ukraine, the first independent confirmation by international media that the guns are in use.</p> <p>Military analysts say the full effect won’t be felt for at least another two weeks, because Ukraine has yet to train enough soldiers to fire all 90 such howitzers pledged by the United States and other allies. Only about a dozen guns are now at the front.</p> <p>Arming Ukraine with more powerful weapons is a politically sensitive issue. The United States, France, Slovakia and other Western nations have been rushing in artillery and support systems — such as drones, counter-battery radar and armored vehicles for towing guns — even as Russia accuses the West of fighting a proxy war in Ukraine, and threatens unspecified consequences if weapons shipments continue.</p>

Disagreements over how aggressively to confront Russia have cropped up in the Western coalition. France, Italy and Germany have suggested that Ukraine use the leverage of more powerful weapons to push for a cease-fire that might lead to a negotiated withdrawal of Russian forces.

Ukrainian officials have pushed back. They insist that momentum is on their side and that talks should come only after battlefield wins and recapturing territory — once an almost inconceivable idea that became more tenable after Ukraine's military inflicted multiple setbacks on Russia even before the arrival of Western heavy weaponry.

President Volodymyr Zelensky, in an interview on Ukrainian television over the weekend, said a diplomatic solution would come only after additional military victories for Ukraine, along with an influx of weapons. The Ukrainian military has repelled Russian troops from Kyiv and from positions near the country's second-largest city, Kharkiv, but is under intense pressure now in a more limited battle for control of the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine.

"It's like an automobile, not a gas-powered, or electric, but a hybrid," he said of ending the war with a mix of military gains and talks. "And that is how war is: complicated."

"Victory will be bloody," Mr. Zelensky said.

In any case, diplomatic talks halted about a week ago, both sides said, throwing the outcome back to the battlefields. And not all has gone Ukraine's way. Russian forces are now close to surrounding the city of Sievierodonetsk, threatening an encirclement of Ukrainian troops.

"I'm surprised people believe Ukrainian forces can absorb this level of losses and then be ready to go on the offensive right afterward," Mr. Kofman, the analyst, said.

Still, the new, longer-ranged Western artillery are the most powerful and destructive of the many types now being provided by NATO countries. They fire three miles farther than the most common artillery system used by the Russian army in the Ukraine war, the Msta-S self-propelled howitzer — and 10 miles farther if shooting a precision, GPS-guided projectile.

Out on the open plains of the east, a long drive over potholed roads and dirt tracks ends with jeeps pivoting quickly into a tree line.

Secrecy is paramount in the cat-and-mouse artillery duels that have defined the war in recent weeks. Soldiers waste no time piling fresh-cut branches onto the vehicles, as camouflage against enemy drones.

In the artillery duels, soldiers value not just range but the ability to quickly hide and move guns and supporting vehicles.

Since their deployment two weeks ago, the dozen or so howitzers operating in two artillery batteries had by Sunday fired 1,876 rounds, according to Ukrainian officers.

With a mix of airburst, anti-personnel fragmentation rounds and other types of projectiles, the Ukrainian gunners have destroyed at least three Russian armored vehicles, and by Colonel Kachur's estimate killed at least several dozen Russian soldiers.

At the firing line in the trees, empty ammunition boxes and spent cartridges were scattered amid foxholes. Kalashnikov rifles leaned against tree trunks.

The officers didn't say what they were targeting.

The purpose of the guns will be to grind down Russian positions and military infrastructure, such as ammunition depots and command posts, he said. Ukrainian soldiers say the howitzers will also save civilian lives by striking Russian artillery firing on their towns.

The types of Western artillery flowing into Ukraine now have several advantages over Soviet legacy systems, Ukrainian artillery officers said. Among the most important is their compatibility with NATO caliber shells, easing fears that Ukraine might soon run out of Soviet-standard ammunition now made mostly in Russia.

In addition to the weapons the United States is sending, the French have promised Caesar truck-mounted howitzers, which are capable of quickly driving away after firing in a maneuver known as “shoot and scoot.” Slovakia has also pledged howitzers.

But the American M777, known as the triple seven, is likely to have the greatest effect for the quantity of guns provided, providing accurate, long-range fire when sufficient crews are trained to use them, military analysts say.

The bottleneck is training. The United States has so far trained about 200 Ukrainian soldiers in six-day courses at bases in Germany. The Ukrainian military divided this group roughly in half, sending some to the front and others to train more Ukrainians. Training soldiers for all 90 guns — the amount that are scheduled to arrive — could take another several weeks, said Mykhailo Zhirokhov, the author of a book on artillery in Ukraine’s war with Russian-backed separatists, “Gods of Hybrid War.”

Smaller numbers of the computer-controlled, self-propelled Caesar guns from France will also help, Mr. Zhirokhov said, but learning to use them takes months. “Even the French think they are too complicated,” he said.

After the soldiers fired the M777, the gun was horizontal again, its barrel covered in camouflaging branches. “Move faster!” an officer yelled. The crew then ran, in case the Russians had fixed their location.

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HEADLINE	05/23 Russia UN diplomat resigns in protest
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/23/world/europe/boris-bondarev-russia-ukraine-war.html
GIST	<p>Boris Bondarev says President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia could have spent the last two decades “developing the country” but instead turned it “into some kind of total horror, a threat to the world.”</p> <p>Mr. Bondarev would know: He spent his career promoting Mr. Putin’s foreign policy.</p> <p>A midlevel diplomat at Russia’s United Nations mission in Geneva, Mr. Bondarev on Monday became the most prominent Russian official to resign and publicly criticize the war in Ukraine since the invasion on Feb. 24.</p> <p>“For 20 years of my diplomatic career I have seen different turns of our foreign policy but never have I been so ashamed of my country as on Feb. 24 of this year,” Mr. Bondarev said in an email to colleagues.</p> <p>While his blistering message was unlikely to reach most Russians given the state’s domination of the news media, his resignation showed that discontent lurks in Russian officialdom despite the facade of national unity that the Kremlin has worked to create.</p> <p>“Those who conceived this war want only one thing — to remain in power forever, live in pompous tasteless palaces, sail on yachts comparable in tonnage and cost to the entire Russian Navy, enjoying unlimited power and complete impunity,” Mr. Bondarev said in his email. “To achieve that they are willing to sacrifice as many lives as it takes.”</p>

The resignation came on the same day that President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine told the world's political and business leaders that they needed to go much further to punish Moscow for invading his country. Speaking by video link to the World Economic Forum, Mr. Zelensky called for sanctions to be pushed to the utmost, for Russia be cut off from international networks and for foreign businesses to halt operations in Russia.

Mr. Bondarev's message was the latest instance of unrest in the Russian elite to emerge in the public eye.

Mr. Putin's climate envoy, Anatoly Chubais, [stepped down and left the country in March](#), reportedly because of his opposition to the war, but he has not commented publicly. Several Russian state television journalists have quit, including an employee [who stormed off the set](#) of a live news broadcast with an antiwar poster. And some business leaders have spoken out, including a [banking tycoon who said the Kremlin had forced him into a fire sale](#) of his assets because of his opposition to the war.

In a phone interview from Geneva, Mr. Bondarev said that while he believed he was in the minority among Russian diplomats for opposing the war, he was not alone. He said that he knew several diplomats who had resigned quietly after the war began, though it was impossible to verify that claim.

"There are people — not so few — who think as I do," he said. "But most, I think, are still in the thrall of this propaganda that they receive and that they, in part, create."

The Kremlin has gone to extraordinary lengths to silence dissent on the war. On state television, the war's opponents are regularly branded as traitors. A law signed by Mr. Putin in March punishes "false information" about the war — potentially defined as anything that contradicts the government line — with as much as 15 years in prison. Partly as a result, virtually no government official had spoken out publicly against the invasion until Mr. Bondarev's resignation.

Still, Mr. Bondarev said that responsibility for the war goes beyond Mr. Putin and includes the Russian Foreign Ministry. Russian diplomats, he said, were complicit in making it seem like Mr. Putin could achieve an easy victory in Ukraine.

"They got Ukraine wrong, they got the West wrong, they basically got everything wrong," Mr. Bondarev said, referring to the Kremlin's view of the world before the invasion. "We diplomats of the Foreign Ministry are also at fault for this, for not passing along the information that we should have — for smoothing it out and presenting it as though everything was great."

Mr. Bondarev, part of the team working on arms control and disarmament at Russia's Geneva mission, said he had seen misleading information cabled to Moscow in recent weeks.

"Instead of presenting your own analysis as objectively as possible along with your suggestions on how to proceed, we often presented information that was certain to be liked," he said. "That was the main criterion."

In his email to colleagues, he said that he "should have stepped down at least three months ago," when Russia invaded, but that he had delayed because he had unfinished family business and "had to gather my resolve."

"I simply cannot any longer share in this bloody, witless and absolutely needless ignominy," Mr. Bondarev wrote.

In the interview, he said that he had grown disenchanted with Russian government service even before the invasion, "when we were not yet such pariahs," but that he had stayed on because of the decent pay and interesting work trips and people he met.

Russia's state media did not immediately report on Mr. Bondarev's resignation, and the Foreign Ministry had not commented as the end of the workday approached in Moscow. Mr. Bondarev, who is listed as a

counselor at the Russian mission on [the United Nations website](#), confirmed his identity in a video call with The New York Times and by sending an image of his diplomatic passport.

Mr. Bondarev said that what had most disturbed him at his workplace since the invasion was the nonchalance with which some of his fellow Russian diplomats chatted about possible nuclear strikes against the West — even though they worked in arms control. On Russian state television, commentators have raised the specter of nuclear conflict with increasing frequency while casting the fighting in Ukraine as a proxy war of the West against Russia.

“They think that if you hit some village in America with a nuclear strike, then the Americans will immediately get scared and run to beg for mercy on their knees,” Mr. Bondarev said, describing his colleagues’ comments. “That’s how many of our people think, and I fear that this is the line that they are passing along to Moscow.”

He said that when he had suggested to his colleagues that perhaps they did not want their children to live in “radioactive ruins,” they would chuckle and say that “this is about values” — echoing Mr. Putin, who in trying to justify his invasion has often described Russia as fighting for “traditional values” against a decadent West.

But Mr. Bondarev said that Mr. Putin’s war was really about the president’s effort to stay in power amid a stagnating economy and gathering public discontent, and a lack of an ideology to mobilize the masses.

“How can you stay and preserve power, without losing it in the face of such objective difficulties?” he asked. “You have to invent a war.”

Mr. Bondarev said he did not yet have any firm career plans. On LinkedIn, after posting his resignation statement, he wrote: “Job offers are welcome.”

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HEADLINE	05/23 Airlines face crucial test this summer
SOURCE	https://ampvideo.bnnbloomberg.ca/airlines-face-crucial-test-this-summer-in-quest-for-profitability-1.1769542
GIST	<p>(Bloomberg) -- Too few pilots. Not enough flights. Jammed planes and higher fuel costs.</p> <p>Those are just a few of the challenges US airlines will face as this year’s summer travel season swings into full gear. A surge in demand will test their resiliency as they seek to return to profitability and move past the pandemic that crippled the industry the past two years.</p> <p>Carriers say they’ve taken steps that leave them well prepared to cope with any hiccups, but early signs aren’t great. Already this year, the rate of flight cancellations is six times what the airlines target.</p> <p>Travel demand has rushed back faster in the US from the pandemic collapse than in any market globally, and the number of passengers flying over the next three months could exceed pre-Covid levels. Planes will be packed because flight capacity is well below 2019 levels, in part due to crew shortages. That combination creates a precarious balance, and disruptions from summer storms, computer glitches or other sources could strand passengers with little hope for a quick fix.</p> <p>“Airlines are doing everything they can to sell every seat on every flight,” said Henry Hartevelt, an industry analyst and founder of Atmosphere Research Group. “All it takes is one bad storm somewhere to throw an airline off track, and there is very little wiggle room left within the airlines and very little wiggle room for the airline industry as a whole.”</p> <p>Carriers are desperate to avoid the types of snarls that hit last year, most initially triggered by weather but worsened when airlines that had ramped up flying too quickly didn’t have enough crews or planes to recover and avoid widespread cancellations. Spirit Airlines Inc. had a miserable 10 days in August, canceling 2,826 flights and enraging thousands of passengers. Southwest Airlines Co. dropped nearly</p>

3,100 over four days in October, and American Airlines Group Inc. scrubbed 1,900 over a weekend later that month.

Through May 22 this year, a group of seven major carriers had canceled 3% of flights, according to data tracker FlightAware.com, above the normal industry target of holding cancellations to between 0.3% and 0.5%. That compares with a 1% cancellation rate for summer 2021, when 12% of flights were delayed an average 42 minutes.

Europe, Asia

“All the airlines and support businesses have adjusted their staffing appropriately and we have as well,” said Ted Christie, the chief executive officer of Spirit. “We feel very good about our staffing.”

European airlines also are rapidly scaling up to tap massive pent-up demand for summer travel. At the same time they’re struggling with staffing, especially in the UK where carriers cut large chunks of their workforce through the pandemic, and at some continental airports. The travel chaos isn’t being mirrored by Asia-Pacific airlines as the recovery gets underway, except in China where Covid-related lockdowns are causing disruptions.

An early test for US airlines comes this month when about 12.4 million people are expected to fly during the four-day Memorial Day weekend that kicks off summer, compared to 8.9 million screened by the Transportation Security Administration over last year’s holiday period, according to travel search engine Hopper Inc. The number of daily fliers over the full summer could at times hit 3 million a day, surpassing a former high of 2.8 million, the American Association of Airport Executives forecast earlier this month.

At the same time, capacity will be 8.3% below 2019 levels in June on domestic routes flown by the six largest US airlines, according to data from Cirium. It will be down 6.6% in July and 4% in August. Flights have been trimmed for a number of reasons, including a shortage of pilots. Others have been grounded because rising fuel prices made some flights too expensive to operate.

Staffing Up

American completed hiring and training for the summer in early May, well ahead of its usual schedule, Chief Operating Officer David Seymour said.

“Everybody in place across the board,” he said in an interview. “Qualified, legal and available.”

Carriers including American and United Airlines Holdings Inc. are anxious to have strong summer operations as they take advantage of the burgeoning demand and rising fares to end pandemic-related losses. The largest US airlines had net losses of \$35 billion in 2020 and \$2.8 billion in 2021, according to Airlines for America, their lobbying group.

Airlines say they’ve trimmed flying to just what they have staff to operate, after ramping up hiring for jobs ranging from cockpit and cabin crews to baggage handlers and call center workers. They’re replacing thousands who left their jobs during the downturn.

While a poor performance this summer likely won’t quell the desire of Americans to fly, carriers do risk a loss of customers and revenue, as well as the risk of reputational harm, Harteveltdt said.

“That’s really what airline executives are clearly looking at,” he said. “They recognize there is a very real risk of losing market share and losing any revenue premium they may be able to command if they don’t do a good job.”

One positive dynamic for the carriers is that with demand exceeding supply, they’ve been able to boost fares. Domestic ticket prices jumped 18.6% in April from March, the biggest such increase since the US Bureau of Labor Statistics started tracking the numbers in 1963. Prices were up 33.3% year-over-year that

	<p>month, the most since at least 1990. For the summer, leisure fares are up about 25% from pre-pandemic levels, and 50% higher than last year, according to Hopper.</p> <p>So far, carriers including Delta Air Lines Inc., United and American, have said the surge in US inflation isn't discouraging travel. Robust demand is allowing them to cover average jet fuel prices that have more than doubled this year over the same period of 2021.</p> <p>The Transportation Security Administration says it's ready for a surge in travelers, after a hiring spree brought the number of agents to 47,500 from about 46,000 at the start of last summer.</p> <p>"That's not to say that there won't be possible hiccups along the way," Administrator David Pekoske said on May 10. "Those things are going to happen, but we'll do everything we can to recover quickly."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 NIFC: central WA elevated risk wildfires
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/wildfire/more-wildfires-than-normal-central-eastern-washington-severe-drought/281-872d023c-4a74-4fe3-a77c-d20a3f04f961
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash — With many counties in eastern Washington experiencing moderate to severe drought conditions, the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) is anticipating an above-average wildfire season in the summer.</p> <p>While western Washington has had a wetter and cooler than normal spring, the NIFC said central and southern parts of Washington have already reached an "above-normal risk" for wildfires. Eighteen Washington counties – all east of the Cascade Mountains – are currently experiencing moderate to severe drought conditions.</p> <p>A monthly report from the NIFC said central Washington is expected to have an elevated risk for wildfires by July, before "significant fire" risk envelops most of the Pacific Northwest by August. According to long-range climate models, Washington is projected to have higher than normal temperatures and precipitation is likely to be below normal during the summer, two factors that can lead to an uptick of wildfires in the area.</p> <p>The Northwest region, which includes Oregon, had approximately 90 wildfires determined to be mostly human-caused, according to the NIFC report. Over half of the fires were in Washington state, with one large wildfire in northeast Washington burning 442 acres by itself. Most of the wildfires burned fewer than one acre of land, the NIFC said.</p> <p>Drought conditions persist across nearly 90% of the western United States and the amount of acres burned this year is 70% above the country's 10-year average, continuing an upward trend.</p> <p>All Bureau of Land Management (BLM) public lands throughout Oregon and Washington will begin fire restrictions Friday. Imposed restrictions mean the use of fireworks, exploding targets or metallic targets, steel component ammunition (core or jacket), tracer or incendiary devices, and sky lanterns or prohibited.</p> <p>"Fire restrictions help protect our first responders, local communities, and public lands from accidental wildfires," said Barry Bushue, BLM Oregon/Washington state director. "We are continuing to see drought conditions across Oregon and Washington. By following fire restrictions, the public can help us focus our fire resources on naturally caused fires."</p> <p>BLM said a fine up to \$1,000, a prison term up to one year and a bill for the cost of fire suppression are possible if caught violating the new fire restrictions.</p> <p>Earlier this year, the University of Washington forecasted a "normal" wildfire season ahead, but fire activity is still expected on both sides of the Cascades.</p>

Brian Harvey, an assistant professor at the University of Washington School of Environmental and Forest Sciences, said an increasing amount of areas burning in the western U.S. over the last several decades is strongly linked to climate as conditions become warmer and drier.

[Washington's Department of Natural Resources](#) (DNR), the largest firefighting agency in the state, started a 20-year [Forest Health Plan](#) in 2017 to fight the ongoing wildfires and combat an estimated 2.7 million acres of "unhealthy forest" in central and eastern Washington.

The DNR's long-term goal is to restore 1.25 million acres of forest to healthy conditions and reduce fuel loads in forests. As of Oct. 31, 2021, the agency said it has completed forest health treatments on 363,143 acres across central and eastern Washington.

The agency said it started its wildfire preparations in spring by readying its personnel and deciding where it will send resources during the summer months.

For the first time in 18 years, the DNR resumed prescribed burns on state lands after putting a hold on planned fires due to air quality concerns. But state officials determined controlled fires could save lives and reduce air pollution long-term with fewer catastrophic wildfires.

This plan comes as trends indicate [fires are starting earlier in the summer](#) and increasing in frequency in western Washington, the cooler and moister side of the state.

A recent assessment from the NIFC found [roughly one in three properties](#) in Washington, Oregon and California are at risk of wildfire exposure, according to an interactive map illustrating risk in the United States.

As wildfire season nears a [report from the United Nations](#) indicated Washington state is already doing many of the things recommended to prevent devastating wildfires.

It's what the UN calls the "fire ready formula," which includes more planning, prevention preparedness and recovery funding.

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HEADLINE	05/23 Worrisome trend: homeless camps fires
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/large-homeless-camp-fire-under-i-5-one-of-hundreds-this-year-as-worrisome-trend-continues
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Fire damage was so extensive and intense at a homeless camp, firefighters say they are not able to determine how it started.</p> <p>The tall flames and huge black plume of smoke could be seen for a mile Sunday around 12:30 p.m.</p> <p>It was a shock for drivers on I-5 and a scare for those living in the encampment and nearby neighbors.</p> <p>The encampment fires have seen a spike this year and have become an increasingly worrisome trend in the city.</p> <p>"I kept saying to myself oh my god, oh my god, what's going on," Andrew Hendry said.</p> <p>Hendry, of Seattle, was on I-5 in Seattle Sunday afternoon heading home and right toward the massive plume of smoke more than 100 feet into the air.</p> <p>"You see the flames and it was raging, raging," Hendry said.</p> <p>It was right under the Denny Way overpass with drivers above.</p>

"First thing, I saw the smoke and I thought homeless encampment fire," said Hendry.

He's seen it before -encampment fires off the freeway.

There have been dozens along I-5 in grassy areas under and around the interstate, but there have been hundreds of fire-related responses citywide. These responses range from large camp fires to a fire in a bin firefighters are called out for where nothing is destroyed and the fire is put out.

"We are currently at 654 fire responses," said Seattle Fire Spokesperson Kristen Tinsley.

She insists the department's 13 fire stations and 200 plus firefighters are working 24/7 to respond to all fire emergencies.

"It is concerning but we do want the public to know we are here to serve and we are paying attention," Tinsley said, speaking of the spike in encampment fires.

From encampment structure fires, to illegal burns and trash fires, the 654 is far more than where we were last year.

At the same time last year, there were 454, an additional 200 fires.

Hundreds of fires and not one encampment has any fire warning or life safety systems, a big concern for Seattle Fire.

"Fires can spread rapidly in brush and tent material, so our worry is someone won't make it out of an encampment in time," Tinsley said.

Seattle fire is crunching the fire data and trends right now to help the mayor's new unified care team - they're tasked with helping to make decisions on how best to handle all aspects of the homeless crisis.

"It's like an accident waiting to happen," said Alice McCullough, a community watch member for this neighborhood near the intersection of Interlake Avenue E and Denny Way.

She also said she serves on Seattle Public Utilities Adopt a Street program and works weekly on cleaning litter and debris from the sidewalks.

"I'm in charge of taking care of this street," McCullough said.

She lives in the apartments next to the encampment. She helped rescue Paris, a man asleep in his tent when the fire broke.

He made it out uninjured - no one was hurt - but the fire was so intense firefighters had to have a second engine come to get it under control.

"I'm happy with the new mayor, I think there is some hope there but I think it takes citizens," said McCullough.

"It really makes you think there has to be a sense of urgency around this because these are people's lives, this is our infrastructure, this is our city," said Andrew Hendry.

Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell is working on a comprehensive plan for addressing homelessness in the city - it's expected sometime soon -likely by the end of the month

Today a spokesperson said the mayor is addressing the homelessness crisis with compassion and urgency and is committed to creating a safe Seattle for every resident.

HEADLINE	05/23 Seattle average gas price: \$5.28/gal.
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/gas-prices-continue-to-climb-seattle-average-now-528g-per-gasbuddy
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — If you're heading to the gas pump today, prepare for even more sticker shock.</p> <p>The average price of gas in Seattle increased 19 cents since last week, bringing the city's average to \$5.28 a gallon as of Sunday, according to GasBuddy's weekly survey of 775 stations in Seattle.</p> <p>The cheapest gas in Seattle on Sunday was \$4.59 a gallon, while the most expensive registered at \$6.19 a gallon, according to GasBuddy. The cheapest gas in Washington state was \$4.33 a gallon on Sunday. The state's average gas price rose by 17.7 cents since last week.</p> <p>Diesel prices have risen 22.6 cents nationally in the past week and now stand at \$5.518 per gallon.</p> <p>Nationally, prices rose 11 cents since last week, GasBuddy said, bringing the average up to \$4.57 per gallon.</p> <p>Gas prices in Tacoma (\$5.17 per gallon, up 18.4 cents) and Yakima (\$5.04 per gallon, up 16.9 cents) also increased since last week.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 Report: SEA airport among most expensive
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/seatac-airport-among-most-expensive-in-the-united-states-per-report
GIST	<p>SEATAC, Wash. — A recent report from financebuzz.com found that Seattle-Tacoma International Airport is one of the most expensive airports in the United States.</p> <p>The finance website looked at 45 major U.S. airports and ranked them by average domestic flight prices. SeaTac airport ranked 35th with an average airfare of \$346.47, up \$59.51 from 2021.</p> <p>Dulles International Airport in the Washington DC area was the most expensive in the country at \$408.09 per flight. Portland, Detroit and San Francisco ranked Nos. 42-44, respectively.</p> <p>The most affordable title belongs to Fort Lauderdale Hollywood International Airport, which boasts an average flight cost of \$233.36, beating out No. 2 Orlando International Airport (\$241.01).</p> <p>"Overall, the national average airfare cost rose slightly, increasing by 0.30% from 2020 to 2021," according to the report. "Adjusted for inflation, this is the first time since 2014 that the average airfare cost has increased year over year."</p>
	Return to Top Click here for the full report from financebuzz.com.

HEADLINE	05/23 Seatbelt crackdown: 'Click it or Ticket'
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/oregon-washington-police-law-enforcement-child-safety-seat-belt-seatbelt-violations-click-it-or-ticket-campaign
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. — Law enforcement agencies across the Pacific Northwest join a nationwide crackdown on seatbelt safety violations, reminding drivers the importance of buckling up before hitting the road.</p> <p>The effort is part of an annual nationwide "Click It, or Ticket" campaign.</p> <p>Local agencies will use federal funding to educate people about seatbelt and child seat laws.</p> <p>Oregon Department of Transportation data from 2020 shows improper seat belt use was a factor in 32-percent of deadly crashes in the state.</p>

	<p>The campaign runs through June 5.</p> <p>"According to NHTSA, in 2020, there were 23,824 unbuckled passenger vehicle occupants killed in crashes in the United States," Portland Police said in a Facebook post on Monday.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 Seattle govt. meetings in person next month
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/wa-public-will-be-able-to-attend-government-meetings-in-person-next-month/
GIST	<p>After more than two years of completely remote meetings, the Seattle City Council will begin hybrid meetings in June, allowing members of the public to convene at City Hall.</p> <p>In response to Gov. Jay Inslee lifting orders that allowed fully remote meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic, Council President Debora Juarez announced Monday that the council would transition to a new, hybrid meeting model, beginning June 1.</p> <p>"We have been working on this for about three weeks in the spirit of public health and public safety, but also honoring the principles of the Open Public Meetings Act, accessibility and people's opportunity to come to City Hall or to come to chambers and provide public comments," Juarez said during a remote council briefing Monday.</p> <p>"So some of us are going to be in chambers for committee — and I certainly will be one of them — but if there are some council members that have a hybrid plan, I'm open to all those options because the most important thing is public health and public safety," Juarez said.</p> <p>In a memo sent to council members Monday, Juarez said the council will "strongly encourage employees and public attendees to wear face coverings during public meetings and signage will be developed for the chamber area emphasizing this message."</p> <p>A chart in the memo also shows defaults for meetings under the new guidance, though individual council members may choose how to attend meetings and conduct committee meetings they chair.</p> <p>Under Juarez's guidance, members of the public will be allowed to attend full council briefing and business meetings virtually, as they have since 2020, or in person, while council members and meeting attendees/presenters will default to participating remotely. A "meeting support team" including clerks, Seattle Channel staff and security will be on site.</p> <p>For committee meetings, the memo says members of the public, presenters and committee members will be allowed to participate either in person or remotely, while the support team and committee chair will be on-site.</p> <p>"I want all of us to just kind of bear with the plan that we're putting forward, the hybrid plan," Juarez said Monday. "And I welcome — I've been on the phone with a couple council members — your questions and concerns."</p> <p>Last month, Juarez said she was not in a hurry to return to have the council return to in-person meetings, noting COVID safety and equity concerns.</p> <p>"Right now our main concern of course is managing the risk of COVID in enclosed areas and managing safety concerns for the elected officials," she said.</p> <p>"If we do return to in-person meetings, it will be a hybrid situation so everyone is comfortable."</p>

	<p>A state law passed in March, allows governing bodies like the council to meet remotely if, after a declaration of a state of emergency, it “cannot hold a meeting of the governing body with 25 members or public attendance in person with reasonable safety because of the emergency.”</p> <p>Still, a spokesperson for the city attorney said Friday, the office interprets current state law, without the governor’s orders, to mean that “there will need to be a physical location provided where a member of the public may attend in person,” noting that whether a council member chooses to attend in person will still be up to the council member, under current council rules.</p> <p>The Metropolitan King County Council plans to return to hybrid in-person meetings, with both council members and the public able to participate remotely, on June 7, after a \$100,000 upgrade to its legislative chamber to make it easier for the public to comment remotely.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 Zoos hide birds; reduce risk of avian flu
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/wa-zoos-remove-birds-from-public-exhibits-to-reduce-risk-of-avian-flu/
GIST	<p>With cases of bird flu confirmed in Washington state, several Washington zoos are taking precautions to reduce risk to certain birds by removing them from public exhibits.</p> <p>The latest outbreak of avian flu hit North America in December and has led to the culling of about 37 million chickens and turkeys in U.S. farms since February. More than 35 million birds in flocks across 30 states have been affected.</p> <p>The first case in Washington was detected in an backyard poultry flock in Pacific County on May 6. Since then, the highly pathogenic disease has been detected in nine backyard flocks in seven counties, according to the Washington State Department of Agriculture.</p> <p>Most recently, it was confirmed in a flock in Thurston County on May 17. WSDA has recommended that live market poultry sales pause for 30 days until the end of June.</p> <p>According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the risk avian flu spreading from birds to people is low and most often occurs after people contact infected birds while not wearing protective equipment.</p> <p>However it is often fatal among birds, and is primarily spread through wild migratory birds and their feces, leading some local zoos to move birds to covered off-exhibit areas where the public is not available to view them.</p> <p>“Our veterinarians and keepers will continue to assess this rapidly evolving situation,” Alan Varsik, director of the Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium and Northwest Trek Wildlife Park said in a news release. “They are closely monitoring all birds in our care for any signs of sickness.”</p> <p>At Northwest Trek Wildlife Park in Eatonville, staff moved all birds, including four bald eagles, a golden eagle, snowy and barn owls and a trumpeter swans to covered areas.</p> <p>At the Point Defiance Zoo in Tacoma, the “most highly susceptible birds” including a peacock, penguins, puffins and murrelets were moved to off-exhibit areas.</p> <p>The Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle has also moved “highly susceptible avian species” to indoor or protected housing. That includes peacocks, penguins, flamingos, cranes and waterfowl like ducks, geese and swans. In some instances, tarps and temporary roofing has been installed at enclosures.</p>

	<p>The Tropical Rain Forest building, which recently reopened after a two year closure, will be closed again since it has a walk-through aviary. Programs at the Wildlife Theater will also no longer include free flying birds.</p> <p>“We know many of our visitors will be disappointed they won’t be able to see birds that are most at risk of avian flu, especially our popular penguins and flamingos,” Woodland Park Zoo Chief Operations Officer Sheri Horiszny said.</p> <p>Some birds at the Point Defiance Zoo are still available for viewing including birds like the king vulture and a macaw participating in the Wild Wonders Outdoor Theater show, that already live indoors and do not have contact with wild birds.</p> <p>The Budgie Buddies Aviary at the zoo will also remain open because budgies are not considered high-risk for developing infections.</p> <p>Staff at the two Pierce County zoos are required to disinfect their shoes before entering animal areas, and those who have backyard poultry are required to shower and change their clothes and shoes before coming to work.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 Seattle is Memorial Day travel destination
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/even-with-gas-prices-soaring-travelers-are-expected-to-flock-to-seattle-this-memorial-day-weekend/
GIST	<p>Even with gas prices continuing to soar, Americans are expected to hit the road in masses for Memorial Day.</p> <p>The average U.S. price of regular-grade gasoline spiked 33 cents over the past two weeks to \$4.71 per gallon. Industry analyst Trilby Lundberg said Sunday that the price jump comes amid higher crude oil costs and tight gasoline supplies.</p> <p>In Washington state, the average for regular-grade gas hit a record Monday at \$5.21 per gallon, up 20 cents from last week and 52 cents from last month.</p> <p>But AAA is predicting 39.2 million people will travel at least 50 miles from their home during the traditional summer kickoff, an increase of 8.3% over 2021 and almost in line with 2017 numbers.</p> <p>And Seattle is expected to be a prime travel destination this long weekend.</p> <p>According to AAA booking data, Seattle will be the second most visited destination among U.S. big cities, just behind Orlando and before Miami.</p> <p>Traffic-wise, the worst time and place to be in Seattle over the holiday weekend will be on Friday (May 27) between 5 and 7 p.m. on Interstate 5 south, Highway 18 and Highway 7, AAA predicts.</p> <p>With prices are already skewing higher and with greater demand, finding last-minute deals is unlikely, AAA said. Mid-range hotel rates, for example, have increased about 42% since last year, with the average lowest nightly rates among AAA-approved hotels ranging between approximately \$199 and \$257.</p> <p>The organization is urging people to book now and stay flexible.</p> <p>“Memorial Day is always a good predictor of what’s to come for summer travel,” said Paula Twidale, senior vice president, AAA Travel. “Based on our projections, summer travel isn’t just heating up, it will be on fire. People are overdue for a vacation and they are looking to catch up on some much-needed R&R in the coming months.”</p>

	<p>This year's nationwide forecast marks the second-highest single-year increase in travelers since 2010, bringing volumes almost in line with pre-pandemic levels.</p> <p>For those heading out, Thursday and Friday are anticipated to be peak traffic days. AAA suggests reducing stress by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arriving at the airport at least two hours early for domestic flights and three hours for international. • Considering booking a flight during non-peak travel periods to cut down on wait times. • Hitting the road when there's less traffic and allowing extra time when traveling to your destination.
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HEADLINE	05/23 WA program to cap fossil fuel emissions
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/wa-will-soon-put-a-price-on-carbon-emissions-for-its-biggest-polluters-heres-how-it-will-work/
GIST	<p>They say the best solution is always the simplest. But what could be Washington's greatest weapon against climate change — or yet another roadblock — is anything but.</p> <p>A new program launching in January will put a cap on fossil fuel emissions and require nearly a hundred of the state's biggest polluters to partake in a carbon trading scheme.</p> <p>If successful, the state could make great strides toward achieving net-zero emissions by rebuilding the way people get energy, drive to work or power their homes — providing a model for the rest of the country while minimizing damage to its economy. Failure could create an entrenched system that prevents meaningful change for decades.</p> <p>Or, as several experts believe, it might not make much of a difference at all.</p> <p>The program reached a milestone last week when the Department of Ecology published new draft rules that will define the scope and regulations of Washington's first statewide cap-and-invest program — the country's second after California kicked off its own in 2013.</p> <p>The public can submit comments now until June 30. Virtual hearings will also be held on June 21, 22, 27 and 28. Ecology aims to finalize the rules by fall. The agency is mandated to launch the program by Jan. 1.</p> <p>"It has been a daunting amount of work," said Becky Kelley, a senior climate policy adviser to Gov. Jay Inslee. "The legislature gave a short timeline to set up a complex program, but we're feeling good."</p> <p>How does it work?</p> <p>Carbon trading, otherwise known as cap-and-trade or, in Washington's case, cap-and-invest, is a market-driven compliance tool used to incrementally decarbonize specific industries.</p> <p>Some argue it's a friendlier way to push businesses toward net-zero carbon emissions without targeting their bottom line. Others say it allows them to pay their way out of the problem.</p> <p>For now, what matters most is how the rules are written.</p> <p>Carbon trading is "the way to transition from fossil fuels that makes real, permanent carbon reductions in the most cost-effective way," said Lorna Luebke, vice president of sustainability at Puget Sound Energy. "And that's assuming proper design."</p> <p>Under the Climate Commitment Act, which was signed into law by Inslee in May 2021, participation in the cap-and-invest program is compulsory for entities that emit more than 25,000 metric tons of direct or imported carbon dioxide each year.</p>

These entities will be able to buy allowances through quarterly auctions hosted by Ecology. But over time these allowances will be reduced, therefore raising the price and making it increasingly expensive to continue burning fossil fuels.

In Washington, 98 entities fall on that list, according to Ecology, including public utilities and energy providers, power plants, paper mills and oil refineries throughout the state.

Smaller “opt-in” entities and individuals are allowed to participate voluntarily, though it’s impossible to predict how many will end up doing so before the program begins.

The program will cover about 75% of statewide emissions, including transportation (35%), electricity (19%), natural gas (11%), refineries (6%) and industrial sources (3%).

The remaining 25% — which includes smaller emitters as well as most of the agriculture, aviation and maritime sectors — will be exempt due to existing laws that already regulate energy use in those industries.

Some entities, namely those labeled “emissions-intensive, trade-exposed industries,” could be eligible for no-cost allowances to soften the impact on their bottom lines.

As a market-based system, the cap-and-invest program will give businesses the choice to reduce emissions through a strategy of their choice, or to buy allowances that allow them to continue emitting, at least until the cap is lowered further.

Failure to buy enough allowances, meet emission goals or violate the law in any way will result in “stiff penalties,” according to Ecology.

“It really has teeth to make sure folks are playing fair and square,” said Luke Martland, the CCA’s implementation manager within Ecology.

Allowance auctions are projected to raise \$500 million a year in revenue, at least 35% of which must be spent on projects that benefit vulnerable populations within the state’s overburdened communities. More than 10% must be spent on tribal projects.

Revenue will be appropriated by the Legislature.

What is a carbon offset?

However perplexing, carbon trading schemes have the potential to reduce or eliminate harmful greenhouse gases by capping large sources of emissions — and using the revenue to fund or invest in further reductions — thereby shifting society away from fossil fuels and mitigating the growing impacts of human-induced climate change.

But the questions still outnumber the answers.

Will energy prices go up? How will revenue be spent? Will the program eliminate carbon emissions?

Many are probably wondering, quite understandably, what is a carbon offset?

Carbon offsets come in various forms and allow all kinds of entities — be it a person, business, state or nation — to balance their carbon footprint by purchasing “allowances,” the money from which can be used to fund or support efforts to reduce emissions. This could involve investing in clean energy technology or paying for trees to be planted — anything to make up for past or future emissions — but the end goal is always to balance, reduce or eliminate fossil fuel pollution.

Offsets are bought and sold through cap-and-invest programs in which entities can buy allowances to continue emitting. When an entity buys an allowance, someone somewhere is being paid or funded to reduce emissions on their behalf so that the entity can continue to burn fossil fuels.

This is part of why carbon trading is controversial. Critics say allowances enable polluters to kick the can down the road by delaying immediate, meaningful cuts in fossil fuel consumption. There's no time to put a price on harmful emissions, they say, the planet is warming fast and direct regulation is the answer.

Proponents believe direct regulation would hurt the economy, cause energy prices to skyrocket and force consumers to pay the price.

Taxation is another way to put a price on harmful emissions.

By putting a dollar amount for every ton of carbon dioxide emitted, a carbon tax sets the price of emissions and allows the market to determine the respective quantity of emission reductions. Cap-and-trade does the opposite by putting a limit on emissions and letting the market set the price.

The risk with a tax is that emissions might not be reduced quickly enough.

With carbon trading, allowances could become too expensive. Proponents might say that's by design, but putting an upper limit on the price of allowances could alleviate that issue.

How did we get here?

Washington is required by law to reduce its carbon emissions 45% by 2030, 70% by 2040 and 95% by 2050 compared with 1990 levels. The state is required to eliminate the last 5% through carbon reduction or removal.

The state isn't alone in attempting to put a price on carbon emissions, nor is the CCA the only major climate policy in the midst of a complex rule making process.

The [2019 Clean Energy Transformation Act](#) committed the state to achieve an electricity supply free of greenhouse gases by 2045, while the [Clean Fuel Standard](#) passed in 2021 requires fuel providers to reduce the carbon intensity of transportation fuels to 20% below 2017 levels by 2038.

These two laws, along with the CCA, represent an unprecedented statewide push for clean, sustainable energy.

The auctions will be hosted by [Western Climate Initiative](#), which was founded in 2007 by the governors of Arizona, California, New Mexico, Oregon and Washington before it was reincorporated as a nonprofit in 2011.

WCI now oversees shared emissions trading markets between California and the Canadian province of Quebec, in addition to individual trading systems in Nova Scotia and soon Washington state.

"15 years down the road, we're barely now starting to see something in Washington state," said Nives Dolšak, director of the University of Washington's School of Marine and Environmental Affairs, and an expert on global climate change policy and market-based instruments.

"Politically, it has been a very long and very difficult path."

Washington's cap-and-invest program wasn't born in a vacuum.

Far from it. The narrow vote with which it was passed, compounded by inflation, supply chain issues and volatile gasoline prices, situates the CCA at the center of a global conversation on shifting perceptions of clean and affordable energy.

The CCA was [passed last year](#) with a small margin in both chambers of the state legislature, and without a single Republican vote.

“The vote was tight,” said Kelley from the governor’s office. “Regulating pollution is always a bit of an uphill battle.”

Carbon trading schemes have been gaining support over the past two decades in cities, states, regions and countries around the world — Australia, New Zealand and South Korea to name a few — even more if one were to count those with active carbon taxes.

But results remain mixed.

The European Union Emissions Trading System (ETS) is the biggest cap-and-trade program in the world. [According to the European Commission](#), emissions have been slashed by more than 42% in target sectors since the ETS was introduced in 2005.

In the U.S., nearly two dozen states have participated in the development of three major regional carbon trading programs: the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, Midwestern Greenhouse Gas Reduction Accord (or “Midwest Accord”) and the Western Climate Initiative.

Will it work?

What remains unclear is how revenue from the program will be spent, and how progress will be defined or measured.

Dolšak said that without quantifiable, measurable indicators it will be impossible to gauge impact, much less hold the government accountable for its investments in measures to mitigate climate change.

Other experts say entities will have to choose between passing the costs of the program onto customers, or absorbing costs themselves.

Still, state officials and energy providers believe a price hike for customers can be avoided.

“That’s, at least for me, a bit difficult to believe,” said Aseem Prakash, a political science professor at the University of Washington. With climbing inflation and reactionary energy prices, a jump in energy prices might be a secondary concern. “In the current inflationary environment, will consumers even notice it?”

“We’re very concerned about impacts to customers,” said Luebbe from PSE. “We like the fundamental theory behind cap and trade, because we do think a successfully implemented cap and trade system will get the most reductions for the least impact.”

PSE is an energy utility company based in Washington that serves the Puget Sound region using coal, hydroelectric, natural gas and wind power facilities across the state. It serves electricity to more than 1.1 million customers in Island, Kitsap, King, Pierce, Skagit, Thurston and Whatcom counties; and natural gas to 750,000 in six more counties.

“Thoughtful and purposeful implementation is really important,” Luebbe said. “Otherwise you get unintended consequences that nobody wants.”

The WCI hosts a shared carbon trading auction with California and Quebec, the same one Washington could eventually join.

Officials and experts believe the linking of different carbon trading markets could reduce energy price volatility.

California’s cap-and-trade system faced heavy criticism from the moment it began. [According to a report by the Los Angeles Times](#), environmental advocates and analysts say the program not only failed to

	<p>improve the lives of low-income people of color living near major sources of pollution, but it's likely it also didn't impact overall emissions for several years after going into effect.</p> <p>"What we try to do is learn from other jurisdictions including California and Quebec," Martland said. "In Washington, a number of things will be done to address those criticisms."</p> <p>While Washington state emissions account for a fraction of nationwide and worldwide greenhouse gases, states often serve as testing grounds for federal policy.</p> <p>In the same way Washington can and has learned from California's carbon trading program, Prakash believes other parts of the nation are looking this way for inspiration.</p> <p>"If we can demonstrate that we can enact policy without hurting the economy ... then other states might get emboldened to try this experiment," he said. "Let's see how far we can go with it."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 Google Maps workers: commute too costly
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/23/technology/google-maps-workers-office.html
GIST	<p>Google Maps contract employees who are required to return to their office in Washington State recently circulated a petition to keep working from home since some cannot afford their commutes, presenting another challenge to Google's plan to refill offices and restore campus life.</p> <p>The issue affects more than 200 workers who are employed by the outsourcing firm Cognizant Technology Solutions, which mandated that they work in an office in Bothell five days a week starting on June 6. The workers play an essential role updating routes and destinations on Google Maps, a service used by more than one billion people a month.</p> <p>About 60 percent of the 200 workers signed the petition. They demanded that managers suspend the return-to-office timeline and first address employees' financial, health and child care concerns.</p> <p>"Gas is around \$5 per gallon currently, and many of us in the office are not able to afford to live close to the office due to our low salaries and the high cost of housing in Bothell," the Cognizant employees wrote. The petition was supported by the Alphabet Workers Union, which has more than 900 members employed by Google's parent company, Alphabet, and its suppliers.</p> <p>Full-time Google employees with office jobs have been told to come in three days a week. In interviews, the Cognizant employees called for the same flexibility. Starting June 6, they will no longer have access to work systems from home.</p> <p>The policies highlight disparities between Google's direct employees and contractors. Google is estimated to have well more than 100,000 temporary, vendor and contract workers who spend their time on Google projects but officially work for other companies. Google does not disclose the number.</p> <p>Cognizant said in a statement that its return-to-office policy depended on the kind of work employees did and the needs of its clients. "The health and safety of our employees remains our top priority, and we require our employees to be vaccinated to return to our offices in the United States," Jeff DeMarrais, Cognizant's chief communications officer, wrote in an email.</p> <p>Courtenay Mencini, a spokeswoman for Google, said in a statement that the health of its community, including contract workers, was a company priority. Google gave its suppliers in Washington State 90 days' notice for workers to return to the office, and those suppliers decided how to execute that policy, she said.</p> <p>The contractors in Washington said most of them made between \$16 and \$28 an hour, far less than typical full-time Google employees. Cognizant managers denied their requests for gas cards or other</p>

financial offsets. They said they hadn't been offered Google's private bus services — a popular perk in Silicon Valley — to ease their commutes.

Tyler Brown, a maps operator who was hired during the pandemic, estimated that he would have to spend \$280 of his \$1,000 biweekly pay on gas to drive his 2006 Toyota Sienna to the office, 73 miles away from his home in Olympia, Wash.

"I'm getting paid \$19 an hour," Mr. Brown said. "It doesn't make sense for me to continue to do" the job. He plans to quit if the return-to-office plan goes ahead.

William Houser, a geospatial data specialist, also said he was wary of a long, expensive commute. His 100-mile round trip each day from Puyallup, Wash., would take more than four hours total. He started the job in April 2021, 13 months after Google closed its offices.

The Cognizant employees expressed other concerns. They said managers had given them 40 days' notice to work in person, not a promised 60-day minimum. That means less time to find child care or move. And they are afraid of contracting Covid-19 in the office.

That's of particular concern to Shelby Hunter, a policy trainer who has had four lung operations. He said his bosses had told him that the return-to-office plan had no medical exemptions.

"I like knowing the work I do makes a difference," Mr. Hunter said. "It just feels like I've been disrespected."

Google, which expanded its office footprint throughout the coronavirus pandemic, has used [perks](#) like free electric scooters and a concert by the pop star Lizzo to entice 164,000 employees to return to campuses. The search giant [approved](#) 85 percent of employees' requests to work remotely or transfer to a different location last year.

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HEADLINE	05/23 Starbucks leaving Russian market
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/business/article/Starbucks-leaving-Russian-market-17191947.php
GIST	<p>Starbucks is pulling out of the Russian market.</p> <p>In a memo to employees Monday, the Seattle coffee giant said it decided to close its 130 stores and no longer have a brand presence in Russia. Starbucks said it will continue to pay its nearly 2,000 Russian employees for six months and help them transition to new jobs.</p> <p>Starbucks' move follows McDonald's exit from the Russian market last week. McDonald's is selling its stores __ which are almost all owned by the company __ to an existing Russian franchisee. The stores won't be allowed to use McDonald's name or menu.</p> <p>Starbucks' stores are owned and operated by Alshaya Group, a Kuwait-based franchise operator. A spokesperson for Alshaya referred questions to Starbucks on Monday.</p> <p>Starbucks entered the Russian market in 2007. In early March, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Starbucks announced that it would keep its Russian stores open but donate any profits to humanitarian relief efforts in Ukraine.</p> <p>But a few days later __ after Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, McDonald's and others temporarily halted their business in Russia __ Starbucks changed course and temporarily closed its Russian stores.</p> <p>"Through this dynamic situation, we will continue to make decisions that are true to our mission and values and communicate with transparency," then Starbucks Corp. CEO Kevin Johnson wrote in a message to employees.</p>

HEADLINE	05/23 Tacoma homeless camp sweep; 8th of 2022
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article261667297.html
GIST	<p>The city of Tacoma plans to remove another homeless camp, this one on East 11th Street near the Hylebos bridge in the Tideflats area.</p> <p>Removal of the camp, where 15-20 people are living, is expected to begin Friday, May 27, the city said in a news release Friday. Officials will post 72-hour notices there on Tuesday, May 24.</p> <p>“The City is taking this action to respond to environmental impacts and the health and safety of people living in the encampment,” according to the news release. “Garbage and debris removal will happen after the encampment is unoccupied, and staff will continue to provide resources and notice to individuals on the site prior to the encampment removal.”</p> <p>Tacoma police and homeless outreach agencies will participate in the removal.</p> <p>It will be the eighth camp removal by the city this year, with the most recent coming May 18 at South 9th and 11th streets near People’s Park on Hilltop. The News Tribune’s Matt Driscoll previously reported that there were seven such sweeps in all of 2021.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 King Co. presumptive monkeypox case
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article261724592.html
GIST	<p>Seattle-King County health officials announced Monday they are investigating a “presumptive” case of monkeypox virus infection.</p> <p>The case was reported to Public Health – Seattle & King County on Sunday, according to the agency.</p> <p>The case “is in an adult male with international travel in the past month to a country that has also reported monkeypox cases recently,” the health department said in a release Monday.</p> <p>“Public Health is working with the patient and the patient’s health care providers to identify individuals who may have been in contact with the patient while he was infectious,” according to the release.</p> <p>“The individual is isolating and does not pose a risk to others at this time.” It added, “We have not identified any high-risk exposures in King County, and we are following up with people who had potential low risk exposures.”</p> <p>The individual was not hospitalized and is recovering at home, according to Monday’s release.</p> <p>“The public and healthcare providers should be aware of the growing international monkeypox outbreak,” said Dr. Jeff Duchin, Health Officer for Public Health – Seattle & King County.</p> <p>“At this time, we have no evidence that monkeypox is spreading locally, but if there are unrecognized cases, that is a possibility.”</p> <p>No cases have been reported in Pierce County.</p> <p>At least 160 confirmed cases of monkeypox that have been reported this month in non-African countries, according to monitoring site Global.health.</p> <p>Monkeypox is a rare viral illness rarely seen outside of the 11 countries in Africa that have reported cases, according to NBC News.</p>

Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	05/23 Footage Buffalo attack spreads, still online
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/footage-of-buffalo-attack-spread-quickly-across-platforms-has-been-online-for-days/
GIST	<p>The livestream of the accused Buffalo shooter's deadly May 14, 2022, attack at a Buffalo supermarket was available briefly via Twitch, but the footage spread quickly across online platforms, and remains online for public consumption.</p> <p>Five full days after the shooting rampage, the ADL Center on Extremism (COE) was able to find the footage on platforms as diverse as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Reddit, Telegram, Bitchute and Gab.</p> <p>Framing and characterization of the videos varied widely between platforms and users, and although many posters did not use the footage to explicitly promote or applaud extremist beliefs, the proliferation of this extremist violent content creates a dangerous online environment, normalizes violence, and has the potential to inspire future violence. Sharing this violent footage debases the memory of the victims.</p> <p>Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Reddit and YouTube</p> <p>The most common iteration of footage is video directly uploaded to the platform itself. These videos and video excerpts, often accompanied by some form of commentary from the poster, were found on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Reddit and Telegram. In some cases, the post includes language critical of the shooter, but this does little to mitigate the potential damage caused by the video itself and creates opportunity for others to use the content for nefarious purposes.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 Russian Telegram spews disinformation
SOURCE	https://www.cyberscoop.com/network-telegram-russian-disinformation-ukraine-detector-media/
GIST	<p>The Russian disinformation effort in Ukraine is so extensive that it now includes a hyperlocal Telegram network which spews disinformation customized to resonate in individual towns across occupied Ukraine, according to recent research published by the Ukrainian think tank Detector Media.</p> <p>The channels, which are anonymous, are used to “legitimize the occupation of specific villages and cities and to establish control over the information environment,” Detector Media wrote in a blog post about its research. The Telegram channels feature Russian propaganda and are entitled with the name of the town for which they serve as a “news” source. According to Detector Media, at least 88 such Telegram channels have been registered since Feb. 24, with a majority clustered in towns near Kiev.</p> <p>Many of the channels’ subscribers are bots, a conclusion which the Detector Media researchers arrive at based in part on how quickly their subscriber bases mushroomed. In other cases, channels’ subscription numbers grew even when mobile communication was unavailable in a given city as happened in the case of the “Berdyansk Tomorrow” iteration, the researchers say.</p> <p>The Kremlin has long used “affinity groups” to amplify the reach of its disinformation efforts, according to Suzanne Spaulding, a former undersecretary at the Department of Homeland Security who is now the director of the Defending Democratic Institutions project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.</p> <p>“Targeting specific narratives to specific populations” is a timeworn Kremlin propaganda tool, she said, though the geographic spin being used in occupied Ukraine appears to be a new manifestation of the method. The Kremlin will generate an audience by appealing to its targets’ interests, Spaulding said, and “then begin to seed it with their narratives.”</p>

“What they were able to do with this is see who liked things and then pull them into separate communications and sort of pull them down into the vortex,” Spaulding said.

But the content on the Telegram channels is not winning Ukrainian hearts and minds, according to Roman Osadchuk, a Ukraine-based researcher for the Atlantic Council’s Digital Forensic Research Lab.

“They mainly reassure the Russian or pro-Kremlin public rather than win new and vast audiences among Ukrainians,” Osadchuk said via email.

However, even if the channels win over just one person per occupied town, they could prove valuable to the Russian effort, said Gavin Wilde, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Wilde said the hyperlocal disinformation effort is a helpful recruitment tool for the Russians because through it they can identify and empower sympathetic individuals in a variety of geographic areas. And even just a handful of people could be valuable in such an effort, he said.

“These pushes for these referenda for independence or for annexation to Russia — they need to somehow launder the narratives through local people that are not necessarily occupying forces directly,” said Wilde, a disinformation scholar who previously served on the National Security Council, where he worked on cybersecurity, information warfare and Russia. “What they can do is try to identify standard bearers within the local population who might be useful.”

The Telegram channels focus on discrediting Ukraine and its leaders, including mayors and regional administrations, the Detector Media researchers said. The propaganda shared over the channels highlights Russian military victories and demonizes the Ukrainian army. Detector Media said the channels’ propaganda also focuses on local “denazification,” a term that refers to so-called Nazi Ukrainians whom the Russians allegedly caught in the occupied settlements.

The channels also urge Ukrainians to evacuate to previously occupied parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions or the occupied Crimea, according to Detector Media. They praise Russian for sending humanitarian aid and blame the Ukrainian political leadership for causing the humanitarian crisis.

“These measures are aimed at the resistance of the occupied territories: The spread of disinformation on those territories by Russian sources might demoralize the opposition,” said Osadchuk, the Ukraine-based disinformation researcher. “Russians consistently try to create an alternative view on the war for Ukrainians.”

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HEADLINE	05/23 ‘Whale’ of a threat in financial industry
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/email-security/a-whale-of-a-threat-evolves-in-the-financial-industry-to-steal-sensitive-data
GIST	<p>Cybersecurity attacks in the financial industry have not only become more sophisticated but more bold. Bad actors are aiming high, directing their schemes at the top level of financial executives to gain the greatest access and, potentially, the highest profit.</p> <p>In gambling hotspots like Las Vegas and Macau, the term “whale” usually refers to a big gambler — the kind who might bet thousands, or even hundreds of thousands, on a single hand of Black Jack or roulette. When cybersecurity experts discuss “whaling,” they are looking at how cybercriminals target high-level executives with an eye to stealing the most privileged information and getting access to the most sensitive data.</p> <p>Typically, these whaling attacks begin (as is so often the case) with a phishing email, according to Tonia Dudley, strategic advisor at Cofense. According to the FBI, these high-level whaling attacks have cost enterprises more than \$12.5 billion in losses during 2021 alone.</p>

“When we look at the themes used across many campaigns, these are typically finance related, such as invoice, purchase order or quote,” said Dudley, adding Cofense has seen “fewer attachments actually making it to the inbox for users to interact with.” However, HTML and HTM files “consistently” make it thorough security filters, Dudley noted.

Dudley, a current member of the board of directors for [the National Cyber Security Alliance](#) who has worked for Charles Schwab and Honeywell, said that more and more whaling campaigns are leveraging “multiple stages in their attack.” For example, the first stage might start with a link to a file-sharing cloud site, such as Google, Dropbox or [DocuSign](#).

“Then, once the file is downloaded, imbedded files or links to pages would execute the second stage, [which] could include anything from a credential login page to malware leading to an entry to point to build to a ransomware attack,” she added.

Harris Schwartz, chief information security officer of Elevate Security, said financial institutions and top executives are often the “prime targets for both spear-phishing and whaling attacks, so they need to be especially aware of who in their organization would be a vulnerable target.”

“Whaling attacks look for users with high-level access credentials that may not think before they click and high-level access credentials,” Schwartz said. “Credentials from a user like this can provide cyber thieves with a pathway to anything from employee or customer personal information, to corporate secrets, to actual fund transfers.”

Due to this trend, Schwartz said that more and more U.S. financial institutions are working to “identify risky users” and augment their cybersecurity training.

Rob Rendell, vice president of payment solutions at Feedzai, added that with “more banking and transactions happening digitally, FIs (financial institutions) need to be especially alert to this type of scam. It’s much easier today for victims to make a quick digital transfer to appease that fake CEO before double-checking the veracity of the request.”

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HEADLINE	05/23 Employees' email drives most data loss
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/email-security/employees-email-still-drives-most-of-the-data-loss-at-organizations
GIST	<p>Cyber thieves are increasingly finding new channels to steal data from unaware employees. However, email is still by far the most popular medium by which enterprises have lost data, according to new research released last week by email security provider Tessian and the Ponemon Institute.</p> <p>Three out of five of the 614 U.S.-based corporate IT security experts who were surveyed in March 2022 said that their own organizations had “experienced data loss or exfiltration caused by an employee mistake on email” in the previous 12 months.</p> <p>“Despite acknowledging the risk ... many organizations do not have training awareness programs with a focus on the sensitivity and confidentiality of data transmitted in employees’ email,” said Larry Ponemon, chairman and founder of Ponemon Institute.</p> <p>He added that just 61% of IT professionals at enterprises surveyed already had training and awareness programs in place for those with access to sensitive information. However, just over half (54%) of these organizations with these programs admitted that they had “addressed the sensitivity and confidentiality of data in employees’ email,” Ponemon said.</p> <p>Despite email interactions having been the digital channel with the most longevity and familiarity for most employees — including, arguably, those in the financial industry — roughly two-thirds (65%) of IT security professionals from various sectors said that email has remained the riskiest channel for data loss in</p>

organizations. Email was seen as potentially less secure even than cloud file-sharing services, found to be risky by 62% of respondents, or instant messaging platforms (57%).

Josh Yavor, chief information security officer at Tessian, said that perhaps one of the most surprising findings from their research was that only two out of five of these email-based data loss incidents were caused by employee negligence from not following policies. Just 28% are caused by mistakes made by employees, he added, while roughly the same number (27%) were caused by insider threats.

“What stands out is that 68% of data loss incidents were not due to active malice by employees,” Yavor said, which affirmed that “a significant number of data loss incidents could be prevented with smarter and tailored training that helps employees avoid these mistakes by coaching them through critical decisions in a moment when they might not remember all of the details captured in company policies.”

For example, as people continue to leave their jobs — often referred to as “The Great Resignation” — they may intentionally “send data or documents to their personal account and not even fully understand how it can impact the company’s security,” Yavor added.

Hence, while employees who work in highly regulated enterprises such as financial institutions might be doing better than most, even they “do not necessarily understand the sensitivity of data shared over email,” Yavor said. He pointed out that nearly three-fourths (73%) of their IT security survey respondents said this was a concern.

Since regulatory non-compliance is arguably the No. 1 consequence of a data loss incident banks, credit unions and investment firms, “this can have significant financial coincidences for this industry,” Ponemon said. “Regulated data is the most difficult to protect.”

Ponemon suggested financial institutions should be more proactive in addressing and reducing email data loss prevention.

“They should assess where in the organization data is most at risk, and leverage machine learning and behavioral capabilities” to alert the IT security department to potential email risk.

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HEADLINE	05/23 Conti group shuts down, restructures
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/conti-ransomware-operation-shut-down-after-brand-becomes-toxic
GIST	<p>The Conti ransomware operation has undergone some significant organizational structure changes in the past months after the brand became toxic due to its affiliation with the Russian government.</p> <p>The Conti operation has been highly successful, helping cybercriminals make billions of dollars after breaching the systems of hundreds of major organizations. While it appeared to be very active, threat intelligence company AdvIntel says the group has been in the process of shutting down the Conti brand and switching to a different organizational structure that involves multiple subgroups.</p> <p>The Conti brand’s downfall appears to have started in late February, after Russia launched an invasion of Ukraine. Shortly after the war began, Conti pledged its support for the Russian government and threatened to attack the critical infrastructure of its enemies.</p> <p>The initial statement from Conti was revised and toned down, but it was too late. Expressing support for the Russian government sparked internal debate and led to vast amounts of internal data, including chats and source code, getting leaked.</p> <p>According to AdvIntel, the factor that sealed the fate of the Conti brand was that pledging allegiance to Russia resulted in the group being associated with the Russian government.</p>

Russia's war against Ukraine drew significant sanctions from the West, meaning that any payment made to the cybercriminals could be considered a payment to Russia and implicitly a violation of sanctions.

"As a result of these limitations, Conti had essentially cut itself from the main source of income," AdvIntel explained. "Our sensitive source intelligence shows that many victims were prohibited to pay ransom to Conti. Other victims and companies who would have negotiated ransomware payments were more ready to risk the financial damage of not paying the ransom than they were to make payments to a state-sanctioned entity."

While Conti has become a toxic brand, the operation was too big and too profitable to just completely scrap. However, Conti leadership decided that instead of suddenly disappearing — REvil tried that approach and it did not go well — they would gradually shift to a new strategy put into practice well before the Conti brand would be shut down.

AdvIntel said the [Conti operation was officially shut down](#) on May 19, when their site's admin panel and negotiations service went offline, and the rest of the infrastructure was reset.

However, before the shutdown, the group continued to appear active and made a grand exit by hacking into the systems of Costa Rica, claiming that their goal was to [overthrow the government](#).

While only a handful of new victims were announced on Conti's leak website in May, the group made political statements and commented about other ransomware, claiming that they were inexperienced or scammers. They made comments including about ransomware that AdvIntel has confirmed to be affiliated with Conti.

Now that the Conti brand has been terminated, the group's leaders have switched to what AdvIntel describes as a "network organizational structure" that is more "horizontal and decentralized" compared to the previous hierarchy, which has been described as "rigid."

"This structure will be a coalition of several equal subdivisions, some of which will be independent, and some existing within another ransomware collective. However, they will all be united by internal loyalty to both each other and the Conti leadership, especially [Conti project frontman] 'reshaev'," the cybersecurity firm explained.

The company says the Conti network now includes fully autonomous groups, such as Karakurt, [Black Basta](#) and [BlackByte](#), which do not use data-encrypting malware and instead only rely on the theft of valuable information to extort victims. Researchers previously noted that some of these groups seemed to be linked to Conti.

The new Conti network also includes semi-autonomous groups that use locker malware such as AlphV (BlackCat), HIVE, HelloKitty (FiveHands), and AvosLocker.

There are also some independent affiliates who work on their own but continue to be loyal to the organization. In addition, Conti leadership has taken over smaller ransomware brands, keeping their name but boosting their capabilities.

"This is different from Ransomware-as-a-Service, since this network, at least at the time of writing, does not seem to be accepting new members as part of its structure. Moreover, unlike RaaS, this model seems to value operations being executed in an organized, team-led manner. Finally, unlike RaaS, all the members know each other very well personally and are able to leverage these personal connections and the loyalty that comes with them," AdvIntel explained.

"This model is more flexible and adaptive than the previous Conti hierarchy but is more secure and resilient than RaaS," it added.

The United States is offering up to \$15 million [for information on leaders of the Conti gang](#).

HEADLINE	05/23 New RansomHouse group extortion market
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/new-ransomhouse-group-sets-up-extortion-market-adds-first-victims/
GIST	<p>Yet another data-extortion cybercrime operation has appeared on the darknet named 'RansomHouse' where threat actors publish evidence of stolen files and leak data of organizations that refuse to make a ransom payment.</p> <p>The new operation claims not to use any ransomware and instead focuses on breaching networks through alleged vulnerabilities to steal a target's data.</p> <p>However, they do not take responsibility for their actions. Instead, they blame the companies for not properly securing their network and for "ridiculously small" bug bounty rewards offered for vulnerability disclosures.</p> <p>"We believe that the culprits are not the ones who found the vulnerability or carried out the hack, but those who did not take proper care of security. The culprits are those who did not put a lock on the door leaving it wide open inviting everyone in," the RansomHouse threat actors write on their 'about us' page.</p> <p>"People are inherently curious and are eager to learn the object of their interest. Usually corporations respond to the message that their "doors are wide open" in negative context, direct threats or silence. In rare cases one could meet gratitude and ridiculously small payments that do not cover even 5% of an enthusiast's efforts."</p> <p>Targeting your data</p> <p>RansomHouse is believed to have launched in December 2021 with its first victim allegedly the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority (SLGA), which is now listed on the extortion site.</p> <p>Since launching the site this month, the threat actors have added three other victims, with the most recent being a German airline support service provider, attacked last week.</p> <p>Interestingly, RansomHouse lists URLs to media posts for victims who are still actively extorted, highlighting the publicity of their attacks and using it as an additional extortion method.</p> <p>If victims don't pay a ransom to the hackers, their data is sold to other threat actors. If nobody is interested in purchasing it, the stolen dataset is published on the Tor site.</p> <p>A bizarre origin story</p> <p>The RansomHouse has somewhat of a bizarre origin story, with the organization first mentioned inside White Rabbit ransom notes, but the actors maintained that they only collaborated with the ransomware gang, and do not utilize ransomware themselves.</p> <p>In a report published today by Cyberint, analysts found Telegram posts promoting RansomHouse on Lapsus\$ gang Telegram channel. This indicates that the threat actors are equally interested in selling data to other threat actors as well as the victim.</p> <p>As such, while the origins of RansomHouse are unknown at this time, the group hasn't emerged as a thoroughly independent entity but rather from within other threat groups.</p> <p>Cyberint claims to have extensively examined the communications of RansomHouse's core members with other threat actors on Telegram channels and reported seeing professional conduct.</p> <p>"They speak politely on both their blog and various Telegram channels and do not get swept into irrelevant discussions. Furthermore, they claim to be very liberal and pro-freedom. They do not want to mix business</p>

and politics and announced that they would never work with radical hacktivists or espionage groups,” explains [the report](#) by Cyberint.

This makes Cyberint’s analysts believe that RansomHouse is a project launched by disgruntled red-team pen-testers who are fed up with low bounty payments and poor cybersecurity planning in general.

[Brett Callow](#), a threat analyst at cybersecurity firm Emsisoft, told Bleeping Computer the following regarding RansomHouse:

The RansomHouse platform is supposedly used by 'club members' who carry out attacks using their own tools - and, according to them, those tools include ransomware such as White Rabbit. I suspect, however, that their claims are untrue and that the same individuals who carry out the attacks are also behind RansomHouse.

As for the origin, a representative of RansomHouse who had phoned the press to publicize the attacks spoke English with what sounded like an Eastern European accent.

However, other cybercriminals have voiced concerns that the new data extortion project is suspicious and not to be trusted.

Encryption factor

Cyberint claims that RansomHouse only steals the data and handles negotiations or sales to other crooks. Additionally, the new operation says they do not perform encryption using a ransomware strain, so the extortion is based solely on the threat of exposing stolen files.

This would explain why the group previously claimed it is a platform for various ransomware gangs, including White Rabbit, that actually engages in encryption.

Weirdly though, the word "encrypted" is present on the RansomHouse Onion site, denoting that the victimized organizations have had their data encrypted, so that part is debatable.

RansomHouse homepage

For now, this new operation is small and counts only four victims that Bleeping Computer is still in the process of verifying.

It is doubtful that RansomHouse will become a large-scale danger any time soon, but the launch of any extortion portal should be a concern for all network and security admins.

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HEADLINE	05/23 Fake Windows exploits infects devices
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/fake-windows-exploits-target-infosec-community-with-cobalt-strike/
GIST	<p>A threat actor targeted security researchers with fake Windows proof-of-concept exploits that infected devices with the Cobalt Strike backdoor.</p> <p>Whoever is behind these attacks took advantage of recently patched Windows remote code execution vulnerabilities tracked as CVE-2022-24500 and CVE-2022-26809.</p> <p>When Microsoft patches a vulnerability, it is common for security researchers to analyze the fix and release proof-of-concept exploits for the flaw on GitHub.</p> <p>These proof-of-concept exploits are used by security researchers to test their own defenses and to push admins to apply security updates.</p> <p>However, threat actors commonly use these exploits to conduct attacks or spread laterally within a network.</p>

Fake PoC targets the infosec community

Last week, a threat actor published two proof-of-concept exploits [on GitHub](#) for the Windows CVE-2022-24500 and CVE-2022-26809 vulnerabilities on GitHub.

These exploits were published in repositories for a user named 'rkxxz', which have since been taken down and the account removed.

As it always happens when a PoC is published, news quickly spread on Twitter, and it even caught the attention of threat actors who posted about it on hacking forums.

However, it soon [became apparent](#) that these proof-of-concept exploits were fake and installed Cobalt Strike beacons on people's devices.

Cobalt Strike is a legitimate pentesting tool that threat actors commonly use to breach and spread laterally through an organization.

In a [subsequent report](#) by cybersecurity firm Cyble, threat analysts analyzed the PoC and found that it was a .NET application pretending to exploit an IP address that actually infected users with the backdoor.

From a deobfuscated sample of the PoC shared with BleepingComputer by Cyble, we can see that the fake PoC launches PowerShell script that executes a gzip-compressed PowerShell script [[malshare](#) | [VirusTotal](#)] to inject the beacon into memory.

This is not the first time threat actors have targeted vulnerability researchers and pentesters.

In January 2021, the North Korean Lazarus hacking group targeted vulnerability researchers through social media accounts and zero-day browser vulnerabilities.

In March 2021, North Korean hackers again targeted the infosec community by creating a fake cybersecurity company called SecuriElite (located in Turkey).

In November, the Lazarus hacking conducted another campaign using a trojanized version of the IDA Pro reverse engineering application that installed the NukeSped remote access trojan.

By targeting the infosec community, threat actors not only gain access to vulnerability research the victim may be working on but may also potentially gain access to a cybersecurity company's network.

As cybersecurity companies tend to have sensitive information on clients, such as vulnerability assessments, remote access credentials, or even undisclosed zero-day vulnerabilities, this type of access can be very valuable to a threat actor.

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HEADLINE	05/23 GM suffers credential stuffing attack
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/gm-credential-stuffing-attack-exposed-car-owners-personal-info/
GIST	<p>US car manufacturer GM disclosed that it was the victim of a credential stuffing attack last month that exposed some customers' information and allowed hackers to redeem rewards points for gift cards.</p> <p>General Motors operates an online platform to help owners of Chevrolet, Buick, GMC, and Cadillac vehicles manage their bills, services, and redeem rewards points.</p> <p>Car owners can redeem GM rewards points towards GM vehicles, car service, accessories, and purchasing OnStar service plans.</p> <p>Targeted in credential stuffing attack</p>

GM disclosed that they detected the malicious login activity between April 11th and April 29th, 2022, and confirmed that the hackers redeemed customer reward points for gift cards in some cases.

"We are writing to follow up on our [DATE] email to you, advising you of a data incident involving the identification of recent redemption of your reward points that appears to be without your authorization," explains a [data breach notification](#) sent to affected customers.

GM states they will be restoring rewards points for all customers affected by this breach.

However, these breaches are not a result of a General Motors being hacked but rather are caused by a wave of credential stuffing attacks targeting customers on their platform.

Credential Stuffing attacks are when threat actors use collections of username/password combinations leaked in other sites' data breaches to gain access to user accounts on a website.

"Based on the investigation to date, there is no evidence that the log in information was obtained from GM itself," explains a different [data breach notification](#) from GM

"We believe that unauthorized parties gained access to customer login credentials that were previously compromised on other non-GM sites and then reused those credentials on the customer's GM account."

GM requires affected users to [reset their passwords](#) before logging in to their accounts again.

Personal information exposed

When the hackers successfully breached a GM account, they could access certain information stored on the site. This information includes the following personal details:

- First and last name,
- personal email address,
- personal address,
- username and phone number for registered family members tied to the account,
- last known and saved favorite location information,
- currently subscribed OnStar package (if applicable),
- family members' avatars and photos (if uploaded),
- profile picture,
- search and destination information.

Other information available to hackers when they breach GM accounts is car mileage history, service history, emergency contacts, Wi-Fi hotspot settings (including passwords), and more.

However, the GM accounts do not hold date of birth, Social Security number, driver's license number, credit card information, or bank account information, so that information hasn't been compromised.

Apart from resetting passwords, General Motors also advises impacted individuals to request credit reports from their banks and place a security freeze if the case calls for it. Instructions on how to do either are enclosed in the notice.

Unfortunately, GM's online site does not support two-factor authentication, which would prevent credential stuffing attacks from succeeding. However, it is possible to add a PIN that customers must use for all purchases.

As for the number of affected customers, GM has only submitted a notification sample to the Attorney General's Office of California, so we only know the number of impacted clients in that state, which is [just below 5,000](#).

Bleeping Computer has contacted General Motors for more information on that front, and we will update this post as soon as we receive a response.

HEADLINE	05/23 Multiple govts buying Android zero-days
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/google-android-0-days-multiple-governments-spying
GIST	<p>At least eight governments around the world have purchased a package of Android zero-day exploits from a company called Cytrox and are using them to install spyware on targets' mobile phones. The development highlights the sophistication of off-the-shelf surveillance offerings, according to a recent report.</p> <p>Google's Threat Analysis Group (TAG) said that by taking advantage of the time difference that keep some systems from being updated for hours after patches were released, the Cytrox exploits allowed governments to target Android users with malware to record audio, add CA certificates, and hide apps, Google's TAG said.</p> <p>The report explained that the governments of Armenia, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Greece, Indonesia, Madagascar, Serbia, and Spain are confirmed to have used the Cytrox exploits in at least three state-backed campaigns, adding there are likely others.</p> <p>"Our findings underscore the extent to which commercial surveillance vendors have proliferated capabilities historically only used by governments with the technical expertise to develop and operationalize exploits," the TAG report said, adding that the group is currently tracking more than 30 additional surveillance vendors with the capability of selling tools to state-backed actors.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 Linux Trojan XorDdoS attacks surge
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/cloud/linux-trojan-xorddos-attacks-cloud-iot
GIST	<p>Cybercriminal use of the Linux Trojan known as XorDdos is on the rise, according to a new report, which found a 254% increase in malicious activity against Linux endpoints using the malware over the last six months.</p> <p>It was first discovered in 2014, and the Microsoft 365 Defender Research Team explained in a recent blog post that the XorDdos Trojan targets Linux cloud and Internet of Things (IoT) endpoints, and deploys botnets to carry out distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks.</p> <p>The team added that the attacks fit a wider trend of attacks targeting Linux-based systems.</p> <p>"By compromising IoT and other internet-connected devices, XorDdos amasses botnets that can be used to carry out DDoS attacks," the team wrote in describing the rise of the XorDdos Trojan. "DDoS attacks in and of themselves can be highly problematic for numerous reasons, but such attacks can also be used as cover to hide further malicious activities, like deploying malware and infiltrating target systems."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 Russian hackers recon Austria, Estonia
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/russian-hackers-perform-reconnaissance-against-austria-estonia/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>In a new reconnaissance campaign, the Russian state-sponsored hacking group Turla was observed targeting the Austrian Economic Chamber, a NATO platform, and the Baltic Defense College.</p> <p>This discovery comes from cybersecurity firm Sekoia, which built upon previous findings of Google's TAG, which has been following Russian hackers closely this year.</p> <p>Google warned about coordinated Russian-based threat group activity in late March 2022, while in May, they spotted two Turla domains used in ongoing campaigns.</p>

Sekoia used this information to investigate further and found that Turla targeted the federal organization in Austria and the military college in the Baltic region.

Who is Turla

Turla is a Russian-speaking cyber-espionage threat group that is believed to have strong ties to Russian Federation's FSB service. It has been operational since at least 2014, compromising a wide range of organizations in multiple countries.

They have previously [targeted Microsoft Exchange servers](#) worldwide to deploy backdoors, [hijacked the infrastructure of other APTs](#) to perform espionage in the Middle East, and [performed watering hole attacks](#) against Armenian targets.

More recently, Turla was seen using a variety of backdoors and remote access trojans [against EU governments and embassies](#) and important research facilities.

European targets

According to Sekoia, the IPs shared by Google's TAG lead to the domains "baltdefcol.webredirect[.]org" and "wkoinfo.webredirect[.]org," which respectively typo-squat "baltdefcol.org" and "wko.at."

The first target, BALTDEFCOL, is a military college located in Estonia and operated by Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, serving as a center for strategic and operational research in the Baltic.

The college also organizes conferences attended by high-ranking officers of NATO and various European countries, so it holds a special significance for Russia in the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the tensions on the Russian border.

WKO (Wirtschaftskammer Österreich) is the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, which serves as an international consultant on legislation and economic sanctions.

Austria has maintained a neutral stance concerning the sanctions against Russia. However, Turla would like to be among the first to learn if anything changes on that front.

Sekoia also noticed a third typo-squat domain, "jadlactnato.webredirect[.]org," which attempts to pass as the e-learning portal of the NATO Joint Advanced Distributed Learning platform.

Performing reconnaissance

The typosquatting domains are used to host a malicious Word document named "War Bulletin 19.00 CET 27.04.docx," found in various directories of these sites.

This file contains an embedded PNG (logo.png), which is retrieved when the document is loaded. The Word file does not contain any malicious macros or behavior, making Sekoia believe that the PNG is used to perform reconnaissance.

"Thanks to the HTTP request done by the document to its own controlled server, the attacker can get the version and the type of Word application used by the victim – which can be an interesting info to send a tailored exploit for the specific Microsoft Word version," [explains Sekoia's report](#)

Additionally, Turla gains access to the victim's IP address, which would be helpful in subsequent attack phases.

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HEADLINE	05/23 New ID verification scam
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/photos-of-abused-victims-used-in-new-id-verification-scam/?&web_view=true

Scammers are now leveraging dating apps like Tinder and Grindr to pose themselves as former victims of physical abuse to gain your trust and sympathy and sell you bogus "ID verification" services.

BleepingComputer came across multiple instances of users on online dating apps being approached by catfishing profiles who ask these users to prove that they are not a former sex offender by buying these services.

Users approached by bruised, "beaten up" victims

In what can be described as one of the most wicked catfishing schemes out there, users of dating apps such as Tinder and Grindr are being approached by attractive-looking profiles.

Except, in these cases, as the conversation progresses, this good-looking person claims they had been a victim of physical assault and abuse; that an ex-date beat them, and shares disturbing pictures attesting to the claim.

One of the people to have almost fallen for the scam, Michael (pseudonym) approached BleepingComputer with these pictures.

"I almost fell victim to a uniquely cruel catfishing scheme," Michael told BleepingComputer.

Michael had created a Tinder profile and matched with a "beautiful trans woman," in his words, and the two seemed to have hit it off quite easily.

As the conversation picked up, a new striking detail emerged. The woman Michael was chatting with requested him to use a third-party service to verify that Michael was not a former sex offender.

The woman, rather the person behind the profile, claimed that she had been assaulted before and shared some distressing pictures shown below to urge Michael to go along with the request. It should be noted that BleepingComputer blurred some of the images below due to their graphic nature.

The request was simple—for Michael to navigate to a website called "GDAH" (Gender Discrimination and Harassment Safety Global) and verify his details.

The home page of *gdahglobal.com*, which is still up states, "it only takes your little time for your guaranteed safety and security," as seen by BleepingComputer.

The website is largely a landing page with just 'register' and 'sign in' buttons—the social media icons present in the footer lead nowhere...

Moreover, the registration process requires users to provide their credit card details and pay a nominal \$1.99/€2.99/£2.99 fee to sign up for an account.

The "GDAH" service claims to run the user's identity against known registered offender databases, but it is unclear if they actually perform this service as you are forced to enter payment information before being able to log into the site and learn more.

BleepingComputer attempted to make contact with GDAH but we did not find contact information listed on any of the website's pages.

We additionally tried to trace some of the couples featured in the 'testimonials' section.

A reverse image search led us to stock photos [[1](#), [2](#)], of these couples, indicating these testimonials were fake.

Over six dozen domains, link to a Cyprus office address

Further investigation by BleepingComputer led us to discover several user accounts that were approached in a similar fashion on Grindr and Tinder by "victims" claiming to be "beaten up" by their dates.

We also came across dozens of domains, which are still up, that claim to be online safety and ID check services and charge users the same nominal amounts in a similar fashion.

While these websites may actually perform the advertised services, there is no proof or guarantee that they do, and many of them have no contact information listed, which can certainly breed suspicion among users who are being led here by these dating profiles.

One concern that arises among users is, if these websites may not only scam you for money but would also steal your identity.

Reddit user *raoulduke512* stated how they were approached by "someone who was 'beaten up' during his last Grindr encounter, supposedly," and led to one of these services.

"When I asked about it being a scam, I noticed his English suddenly became odd in a non-standard way. When I pointed out the site was just a portal for credit card info, I think he started to type another response but then blocked me a few minutes later," [wrote](#) the Redditor.

Another user reports [receiving](#) "a text message from a 'girl' sending me this link [datesafeplaysafe.com] to be able to 'hookup' with her."

Nearly all of these websites with many still up, implement the same workflow and lure—a single landing page collecting credit card details to "sign up" the user for a service that claims to rule out their sex offender status.

Dodgy "membership" options and billing agreements

The credit card form embedded by virtually all of these websites is actually an HTML *iframe*, as a Redditor rightfully [pointed out](#).

These frames, we observed, are served by nonsensical-sounding domain names like *ndwhvl.com*, *ntrfrnc.com*, *pcngyh.com*, *slmtstfrs.com*, and *vrlstnglv.com* which feature an identical site design and list a Cyprus office address at the bottom.

The terms and conditions listed on these payment processing websites reveal something even more interesting. The user is apparently being enrolled into a recurring subscription with the following membership options:

- Full Access (€39.99) This allows you full access to the site and all messaging
- Limited Messaging Access (€19.99) This membership allows you to browse the site but only message 5 times per month
- Premium Messaging (€49.99) This allows you full access to the site and premium messaging
- Quarterly Membership, Full Access (€89.97) billed in 3 equal monthly installments of (€29.99) This allows you full access to the site and all messaging for 3 months at a discounted rate.

As such, with rising [online dating scams](#), users should be wary of profiles trying to lure them to use identity verification services, no matter how convincing their story may sound.

There is no indication of what the operators of these websites are actually up to. For all we know, in addition to charging your credit card arbitrary amounts by enrolling you into "subscriptions," some of these web portals could very well be set up by actors attempting to collect and sell your personal information.

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SOURCE	https://www.techtarget.com/searchsecurity/news/252520585/Verizon-DBIR-Ransomware-dominated-threat-landscape?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>Nearly 25% of all data breaches examined in the 2022 Verizon Data Breach Investigations Report 2022 involved ransomware, an ominous sign for enterprises.</p> <p>For the fifth consecutive year, ransomware continued its upward trajectory in the annual Data Breach Investigations Report (DBIR), which analyzed 23,896 incidents in 2021 with over 5,000 confirmed data breaches from an array of organizations, sectors and regions. Now in its 15th year, the DBIR did not include ransomware until 2013, when sufficient data emerged to grant concern. In the relatively short time since its inclusion, ransomware activity has steadily increased as a major threat.</p> <p>Last year was no different and marked a significant increase year over year, which highlights another problem.</p> <p>Despite ongoing warnings and alerts, ransomware gangs continue to ravage enterprises and public sector entities.</p> <p>"This year ransomware has continued its upward trend with an almost 13% increase -- a rise as big as the last five years combined (for a total of 25% this year)," the 2022 Verizon DBIR read.</p> <p>That number excludes extortion groups like Lapsus\$ that steal and ransom confidential data but do not deploy actual ransomware, Alex Pinto, team manager at Verizon DBIR, told SearchSecurity.</p> <p>Whether data is exposed or not, the real damage from ransomware comes from the disruption of victims' business operations. Pinto said ransomware has evolved into an ideal attack for cybercriminals looking to earn illicit revenue.</p> <p>"You're just selling back to the people who you stole from in the first place," he said. "They are the perfect customer for you, and this is what makes it so appealing as a vector of growth in the way that financially motivated breaches play out in the threat landscape."</p> <p>The report emphasized that on its own, ransomware is simply a way to profit off a compromised organization.</p> <p>"Ransomware operators have no need to look for data of specific value, e.g. credit cards or banking information. They only need to interrupt the organizations' critical functions by encrypting their data," the DBIR read.</p> <p>Threat vectors and patterns</p> <p>The Verizon DBIR team determined that attackers utilized stolen credentials, phishing, exploiting vulnerabilities and botnets to compromise an enterprise network, and all four paths enabled ransomware attacks. Though the ransomware strains and groups causing that damage varied, the DBIR noted the vectors were less diverse. Desktop sharing software, which was a concern in last year's report as well, accounted for 40% of ransomware incidents, while 35% involved the use of email.</p> <p>To make matters worse, ransomware was present in almost 70% of malware breaches, according to the report.</p> <p>Malware is one of seven actions highlighted in the report that represent the steps leading up to an incident or breach and are broken down by variety and vector. Ransomware was one of the three most common actions along with phishing and downloaders, according to the report. During a ransomware attack, the most common malware included droppers, which the report noted aligns with email being a popular initial access point.</p> <p>"If attackers have credentialed remote access, they can leverage that directly. Otherwise they must make their own remote access by emailing either malicious links or attachments," the DBIR read.</p>

Ransomware played a role in third-party breaches, where it accounted for one of five top action varieties. Additionally, it was the number one threat to "very small businesses," a new category featured in the report. The DBIR team included the section to assist businesses that lack the security resources of large corporations. Ransomware accounted for nearly 80% of the attacks against very small businesses.

"Especially those in these specific small companies, which are less than 10 employees, they have been severely hit by ransomware," Pinto said.

The ransomware economy

Another novel addition to the 2022 Verizon DBIR was an economic analysis from the threat actors' perspective. The DBIR team combined many factors including phishing test success rate data, criminal forum data and ransomware payment data to conduct simulations. It also compared small-time cybercriminals with large criminal enterprises and accounted for outsourced labor, the cost of access and lateral movement.

The majority of access did not even cost a dollar, according to the report. That is in part due to the commonly used and cost-efficient initial access point mentioned earlier: email.

After 300 simulated ransomware scenarios based on dark web forum data, the DBIR team determined the actors made over \$600,000, though the median profit was just over \$100. Sixty percent of the simulated incidents made no profit.

Puzzled by the findings, which varied greatly, the DBIR team broadened its scope to 500 ransomware actors. Out of the new pool, 1.4% showed a loss.

"However, the median profit after 300 incidents was \$178,465, with the top simulated earner making \$3,572,211," the DBIR read. "The takeaway is that ransomware is more of a lottery than a business."

That is in stark contrast to conventional wisdom about [ransomware-as-a-service](#) outfits; threat analysts and researchers have found some major RaaS groups have made tens of millions of dollars in just a few years of existence. Equipped with customer service representatives and communication support, many ransomware groups act like legitimate businesses. However, the DBIR analysis reveals that business may not always be as lucrative as advertised.

It also revealed important lessons for enterprises.

"If an actor has to pay for services to break in rather than just an access product, you've made yourself much less of a target," the DBIR read. "Use antivirus to remove bots, implement patching, filtering, and asset management to prevent exposed vulnerabilities and standardize two-factor authentication and password managers to minimize credential exposure."

Addressing email, which is the largest vector according to the Verizon DBIR, is also essential in preventing ransomware attacks. The DBIR team recommended locking down exposed infrastructure and focusing on vectors like [Remote Desktop Protocol](#) (RDP) and email, as well as conducting email training to heighten employee awareness.

The risks associated with RDPs as a common infection vector for ransomware continue into 2022. They were included in a recent joint cybersecurity [advisory](#) that recommended enforcing multifactor authentication to secure remote desktop access.

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HEADLINE	05/23 Russia reverses blocking The Tor Project
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/3ab33v/russia-reverses-decision-on-blocking-tor-projects-website
GIST	A Russian appeals court has reversed a decision under which the website for the privacy-focused organization The Tor Project was blocked, according to Roskomsvoboda, a digital rights nonprofit in

the country. Following that, the site should be unblocked, [Roskomsvoboda argues](#) in a blog post published Thursday, which would potentially be notable in a country that has increasingly cracked down on independent and outside news amid its invasion of Ukraine.

The move does not necessarily mean it will be any easier to use the Tor anonymity network itself from Russia. Russia has a history of blocking access to the network, and the court has directed for a new trial to take place. But if the website does eventually become more readily available in Russia, more people might be able to access information and resources on how to stay anonymous online.

“If this decision is cancelled, there will be no formal grounds for continuing the blocking and Tor will have to be removed from the registry of Roskomnadzor,” a representative of Roskomsvoboda told Motherboard in an online chat, referring to the Russian government censorship agency.

“The decision (main requirement) is canceled in part with the direction of the case for a new trial,” the result [published on the Saratov regional court’s website](#) reads in Russian.

The Tor Project website was blocked in a ruling in December 2017 at the Saratov court. Since then, Roskomsvoboda has raised issues with the ruling.

The first was that in the 2017 case the court did not summon the Tor Project itself.

“That is an absolute basis for setting the decision aside, since the decision to block the site affected the rights and obligations of its owner,” Ekaterina Abashina, the media lawyer of Roskomsvoboda, said in the blog post.

The second point was that Russian law does not contain any general ban on the spreading of information related to anonymizing technology, Roskomsvoboda writes.

Abashina said in the blog post that the court set the case for a new trial, this time with The Tor Project as part of the proceedings.

An update to the blog post says that the new trial is set for May 26.

“The decision to overturn the block against our website is incredible news for digital rights and the freedom to use Tor in Russia. This important outcome would not be possible without Roskomsvoboda's pro bono support, but the fight is not over,” the Tor Project told Motherboard in a statement.

“We need those who can to donate to Roskomsvoboda so they can continue their legal work, and we need others to run Tor bridges so that all Russian users can circumvent ongoing censorship against Tor.”

In March, [Twitter launched a Tor onion service](#), meaning that Russian users should be able to use the Tor anonymity network to reach the site.

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HEADLINE	05/23 Microsoft ‘frontline’ for Ukraine war
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/tech/microsoft-frontlines-russia-ukraine-conflict/281-f61acb51-7bca-4736-b83c-5c496ab7e59e
GIST	<p>REDMOND, Wash. — It is quite the statement.</p> <p>"The front line between Ukraine and Russia actually runs through Redmond, Washington," Microsoft President Brad Smith said.</p> <p>Smith, for the first time, publicly discussed how the company helped fend off a Russian attack on Ukraine and how the Russians signaled they were about to launch a physical invasion.</p>

"I think one of the interesting things that historians will ultimately ask is when did this war begin, and who saw the first shots that were fired? The conventional wisdom is that Russia invaded Ukraine starting on February 24. But the truth is, we started to see the cyberattacks unleashed on Ukraine February 23, the day before, and I think historians may well conclude that those were the first shots, and they were first seen, not in Ukraine itself, but in Redmond," Smith said.

Smith is referring to the Microsoft Threat Intelligence Center (TIC) and Digital Security Unit (DSU), which runs out of a top-secret facility in Redmond. The TIC tracks "nation-state actors" and the DSU analyzes the activity.

Smith said Microsoft, with its partnerships with Ukrainian officials on Windows platforms, was able to see those Russian nation-state actors using malware with names like 'FoxBlade' or 'DesertBlade' to attack the country.

These actors specifically targeted Ukraine's internet and nuclear capabilities, along with the electrical supply. The attacks targeted specific locations in territories near the capital city of Kyiv and eastern flank of Kharkiv. There were 22 attacks, according to Microsoft, in the first few days alone. One day in particular, the Russians deployed a malware attack on a major Ukrainian broadcasting company, the same day it also physically attacked a TV tower.

The "special forces" tech team on the Eastside raced to write code for the Windows devices, which you could think of as a cyber "stinger missile" that Smith said successfully neutralized many of the attacks and kept Ukraine running.

"What we see is almost potentially an early warning signal. If the Russian military wants to go into a new site, it may try to take the computers down an hour before the troops start getting close, or they artillery shells start firing," he said. "It's a responsibility that we take very seriously. I think with each passing month of the war in Ukraine, we are learning new things, as one always does in a war about not just the way we can be more effective, but the need for us to be ever more effective."

Smith also added the war has made him reflect on when the Russians may have started testing such a method, and how that first dealt with how Russia spread misinformation.

"The person who first got me focused on this was Vladimir Zelenskyy. I was talking with him last September, when of course, he was president of Ukraine. He wasn't on everybody's mind the way he is today," Smith said. "What are you really seeing that causes concern? Where he immediately went was to describe how last January of 2021, the Ukrainians saw the Russians experiment with vaccine disinformation. They often use Ukraine as a training ground."

Smith continued, "We start by thinking this is about politics, it is, but it's about a whole lot more than politics. Especially when you have technology platforms that can enable a foreign authoritarian government to seek to erode confidence in a democratic society."

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HEADLINE	05/23 Court blocks Florida social media law
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/appeals-court-florida-law-on-social-media-unconstitutional-2/
GIST	<p>ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — A Florida law intended to punish social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter is an unconstitutional violation of the First Amendment, a federal appeals court ruled Monday, dealing a major victory to companies who had been accused by GOP Gov. Ron DeSantis of discriminating against conservative thought.</p> <p>A three-judge panel of the Atlanta-based 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals unanimously concluded that it was overreach for DeSantis and the Republican-led Florida Legislature to tell the social media companies how to conduct their work under the Constitution's free speech guarantee.</p>

“Put simply, with minor exceptions, the government can’t tell a private person or entity what to say or how to say it,” said Circuit Judge Kevin Newsom, an appointee of former President Donald Trump, in the opinion. “We hold that it is substantially likely that social media companies — even the biggest ones — are private actors whose rights the First Amendment protects.”

The ruling upholds a similar decision by a Florida federal district judge on the law, which was signed by DeSantis in 2021. It was part of an overall conservative effort to portray social media companies as generally liberal in outlook and hostile to ideas outside of that viewpoint, especially from the political right.

“Some of these massive, massive companies in Silicon Valley are exerting a power over our population that really has no precedent in American history,” DeSantis said during a May 2021 bill-signing ceremony. “One of their major missions seems to be suppressing ideas.”

However, the appeals panel ruled that the tech companies’ actions were protected, with Judge Newsom writing that Facebook, Twitter, TikTok and others are “engaged in constitutionally protected expressive activity when they moderate and curate the content that they disseminate on their platforms.”

There was no immediate response to emails Monday afternoon from DeSantis’ press secretary or communications director on the ruling. DeSantis is running for reelection this year and eyeing a potential run for the 2024 GOP presidential nomination. He was the first governor to sign a bill like this into law, although similar ones have been proposed in other states.

One of those, in Texas, was allowed to go into effect by the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, and the tech companies involved there are asking for emergency U.S. Supreme Court review on whether to block it. No decision on that was immediately released.

The Computer & Communications Industry Association, a nonprofit group representing tech and communications companies, said the ruling represents victory for Internet users and free speech in general — especially as it relates to potentially offensive content.

“When a digital service takes action against problematic content on its own site — whether extremism, Russian propaganda, or racism and abuse — it is exercising its own right to free expression,” said CCIA President Matt Schruers in a statement.

As enacted, the law would give Florida’s attorney general authority to sue companies under the state’s Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices Act. It would also allow individual Floridians to sue social media companies for up to \$100,000 if they feel they’ve been treated unfairly.

The bill targeted social media platforms that have more than 100 million monthly users, which include online giants as Twitter and Facebook. But lawmakers carved out an exception for the Walt Disney Co. and their apps by including that theme park owners wouldn’t be subject to the law.

The law would require large social media companies to publish standards on how it decides to “censor, deplatform, and shadow ban.”

But the appeals court rejected nearly all of the law’s mandates, save for a few lesser provisions in the law.

“Social media platforms exercise editorial judgment that is inherently expressive. When platforms choose to remove users or posts, deprioritize content in viewers’ feeds or search results, or sanction breaches of their community standards, they engage in First-Amendment-protected activity,” Newsom wrote for the court.

Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	05/24 Afghan rebel group seeks US assistance
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/politics/afghan-rebel-group-asks-bidens-support-warns-new-terror-threats
GIST	<p>Afghanistan's lead resistance group, the National Resistance Front (NRF), has one message for the Biden administration: don't ignore terror threats coming from Afghanistan. The group noted that mistake was made by the Clinton administration in the lead up to the 9/11 terror attacks.</p> <p>In a statement to Fox News Digital, the NRF's head of foreign relations, Ali Maisam Nazary, said the time for action is now.</p> <p>"Our message to the Biden administration is to not make the same mistake the Clinton administration (made) when they ignored the threat of terrorism in the mid and late 1990s and led to 9/11. The White House has to act fast and adopt a proactive approach to counterterrorism by allowing democratic and anti-terrorist forces like the NRF to liberate Afghanistan," he said.</p> <p>The warning comes as the Taliban is facing a new low-intensity campaign in the north from rebels, who in recent weeks have launched attacks against its fighters.</p> <p>Afghanistan's fighting season is known to start in the spring and generally run through October. In previous years this was when the Taliban and its allies would wage attacks against U.S. forces and the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF).</p> <p>The current fighting is largely happening in the north of the country and is being led by the NRF in the country's Panjshir Valley, a rugged and mountainous bastion of anti-Taliban resistance north of Kabul where the Taliban consolidated its control last September.</p> <p>The NRF, led by Ahmad Massoud, is viewed as the most formidable Afghan resistance unit fighting the Taliban, and its leader has vowed to continue the fight even after the loss of its rear base in the Panjshir Valley. Massoud's father, Ahmad Shah Massoud, was a prominent Mujahidin rebel who fought against the Soviets in 1980s and was assassinated by al Qaeda operatives just two days before the 9/11 attacks.</p> <p>The NRF has extensive knowledge of the difficult terrain in Afghanistan, and like the Taliban's insurgency against U.S. forces, will utilize asymmetric tactics against the better equipped Taliban.</p> <p>Even though overthrowing the Taliban is highly unlikely, especially without an external patron, that doesn't mean the NRF won't cause trouble for the Taliban. Sibghattullah Ahmadi, a spokesperson for the NRF, said in a tweet earlier this month that the Taliban launched an attack at the Shaba base and lost eight fighters to NRF forces.</p> <p>Ali Maisam Nazary said the NRF is taking the fight to the Taliban in the spring fighting season.</p> <p>"There has been an offensive by NRF in Panjshir, Baghlan, Takhar and Badakhshan provinces and even with reinforcements the Taliban faced casualties the NRF inflicted, including prominent commanders in the past 10 days and the fighting is still going on," Nazary told Fox News Digital.</p> <p>He added, "This shows us their weaknesses, and their supposed strength from the leftover U.S. equipment was useless."</p> <p>He also claimed the Taliban are committing war crimes and have increased attacks on civilians in a desperate attempt to regain control of restive provinces.</p> <p>Taliban officials initially denied the fighting but then were forced to acknowledge it when photographs of their dead began to spread on the internet and social media. Fox News Digital has not independently</p>

confirmed the below photo supplied by the National Resistance Front. The photo is said to show Taliban casualties from recent fighting between the two sides.

Resistance to the Taliban has not only come from the NRF but includes other lesser-known armed groups that share the common goal of dislodging the Taliban from power. Beyond their desire for a Taliban-free Afghanistan, there is very little cooperation or coordination among the disparate groups, which hinders their ability to seriously challenge the Taliban.

Most analysts and observers do not view the National Resistance Front or other armed groups as an existential threat to the Taliban's hold on power. External backing is a key ingredient to sustaining a successful insurgent campaign and so far, the NRF lacks any major outside support.

"For the NRF to pose a real strategic threat to the Taliban, they will need to gain stronger external support, for supplies of weapons, shelter and training. But neighboring states are still more worried about a destabilized Afghanistan than about assisting to overthrow the Taliban, so there is only moderate support for the NRF abroad", noted Roger Baker, director at Stratfor Center for Applied Geopolitics at RANE.

There also does not appear to be any appetite from the Biden administration or Congress to fund the anti-Taliban resistance. While the Biden administration continues to honor the withdrawal agreement struck during the Trump administration, analysts believe it has no interest in funding the nascent anti-Taliban insurgency.

Observers warn that a significant U.S. investment in the NRF would likely destabilize Afghanistan further and could exacerbate the already catastrophic humanitarian crisis. While the Taliban are likely to remain in power, it's clear their new government is struggling to pacify the entire country.

Afghanistan's Islamic State affiliate, known as the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISIS-K), also poses a threat to Afghanistan's stability. Unlike most of the resistance groups that desire a free and democratic Afghanistan, ISIS-K is committed to an uncompromising goal of creating a transnational Islamic caliphate and regards the Taliban as apostates for negotiating with the United States.

ISIS-K recently claimed responsibility for a string of terror attacks in Mazar-i-Sharif and Kunduz in late April, killing at least 20 people. A United Nations report in February, estimated that ISIS-K's strength in Afghanistan has almost doubled from 2,200 members to almost 4,000.

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HEADLINE	05/23 BP released terrorist; re-arrest 2 weeks later?
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/border-patrol-released-suspected-terrorist-ice-rearrest-weeks
GIST	<p>EXCLUSIVE: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement didn't rearrest a suspected terrorist who was released into the United States by Border Patrol agents until two weeks after he was flagged by the Federal Bureau of Investigations.</p> <p>The suspected terrorist, Isnardo Garcia-Amado, 35, was released into the United States by Border Patrol agents on April 18 near Yuma, Arizona, and given a GPS monitoring device as an alternative to detention, according to a memo from a federal source obtained by Fox News.</p> <p>Garcia-Amado, a Colombian citizen, was then flagged by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Terrorist Screening Center on April 21, which determined he is a match on the terror watch list.</p> <p>U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement didn't receive authorization to arrest the individual until May 4, and he was arrested in Pinellas County, Florida, on May 6.</p> <p>He was released from the Pinellas County jail and transferred to ICE custody on May 9, according to the memo.</p>

	<p>A Department of Homeland Security spokesperson told Fox News that after receiving additional information about Garcia-Amado, the man was "promptly detained."</p> <p>"In this instance, after receiving additional law enforcement information, ICE, in coordination with federal and local law enforcement, promptly detained this individual, who was already under supervision via a Global Positioning System (GPS) monitoring device," the spokesperson said. "Noncitizens encountered in the United States without authorization undergo multi-layered screening and vetting. Our immigration enforcement priorities are clear: DHS is focused on those who pose a threat to our national security, public safety, and border security. When we receive additional derogatory information from our law enforcement partners, DHS and our federal partners take swift action to apprehend those individuals."</p> <p>The spokesperson added that Garcia-Amado is in ICE custody pending the disposition of his immigration case.</p> <p>Republican Florida Governor Ron DeSantis told Fox News that he is demanding an explanation of why a suspected terrorist was allowed to live in the United States for weeks.</p> <p>"The State of Florida has consistently addressed the Biden Administration for information on illegal alien resettlement in Florida, which the federal government has declined to provide," DeSantis said. "We demand to know why DHS released a suspected terrorist into the United States and allowed him to live freely in Florida for weeks. How many more known or suspected terrorists has the Biden administration allowed into our country?"</p> <p>Tom Homan, former acting ICE director, said that under his watch the individual would have been arrested within an hour. He called the actions by the Department of Homeland Security in this case inexcusable.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/24 Deadly attacks Burkina Faso villages
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/least-11-civilians-killed-burkina-faso-village-attacks-says-governor-2022-05-23/
GIST	<p>OUAGADOUGOU, May 23 (Reuters) - At least 11 civilians were killed in attacks on two villages in northern Burkina Faso on Sunday, a regional governor said in a statement.</p> <p>Unidentified armed assailants targeted the two communities in Seno province, which is among those hit by rising insecurity as jihadist groups with links to al Qaeda and Islamic State seek to gain control over once peaceful parts of West Africa's Central Sahel region.</p> <p>In a statement on Monday, Governor Rodolphe Sorgho did not provide further details on the attacks but called on locals to be vigilant.</p> <p>A local official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said a further 14 civilians, who were recorded as missing after the raids, had been found dead.</p> <p>Reuters could not independently verify the information.</p> <p>In recent years, Islamist violence has killed thousands of people and forced more than 2 million to flee their homes in the Sahel.</p> <p>On Saturday, the Burkinabe army said five soldiers had been killed repelling a large-scale militant attack in the Central-North region earlier that day. It said its forces killed some thirty militants in the encounter.</p> <p>Public frustration with the authorities' handling of the security situation led to protests in Burkina Faso that culminated in a military coup in January.</p>

	The crisis in the Sahel started when militants took over neighbouring Mali's desert north in 2012, prompting France to intervene the following year in an attempt to push them back. But the insurgents have regrouped in recent years and seized more territory.
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HEADLINE	05/24 Iraq officials: IS attacks kill 12 civilians
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iraqi-officials-attacks-militants-kill-12-civilians-84930311
GIST	<p>BAGHDAD -- Militants from the Islamic State group killed 12 civilians and wounded at least six in two separate attacks in Iraq, apparently taking advantage of a sandstorm that sharply reduced visibility across the country, security officials said Tuesday.</p> <p>The attacks occurred on Monday evening in Kirkuk and Diyala provinces, where farmers came under fire while harvesting their crops.</p> <p>The Iraqi Security Media Cell said in a statement that six civilians were killed in the attack in the village of Sami Asi, south of the city of Kirkuk. The Kurdish news network Rudaw said after the killings, an Iraqi federal police force that arrived on the scene was ambushed and three policemen were killed.</p> <p>Earlier, IS launched an attack in Diyala's town of Gulala, killing six residents, two Iraqi security officials said.</p> <p>The Sunni extremist group claimed responsibility late Monday for the Kirkuk attack, claiming it killed five Shiites in their agricultural fields in al-Rashad area in Kirkuk and set fire to five vehicles. It said its fighters clashed with a supporting unit from the federal police and destroyed one of their vehicles.</p> <p>IS overran large parts of Iraq and Syria in 2014 and declared a self-styled Islamic caliphate. The group was territorially defeated in 2017 after a years-long war spearheaded by local forces and a U.S.-led international coalition. But it continues to carry out hit-and-run attacks through sleeper cells across both countries.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/24 Arrest: inciting terror via social media
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/albanian-arrested-for-inciting-terror-via-social-media/2022/05/24/ee53c51e-db42-11ec-bc35-a91d0a94923b_story.html
GIST	<p>TIRANA, Albania — An Albanian man has been arrested for allegedly using social media to call for terror attacks against state institutions, police said Tuesday.</p> <p>A statement said a 56-year old man identified only as I.S. (L.) used fake profiles to post “inciting photos and writings, public calls and propaganda to commit terror attacks against some important state institutions.”</p> <p>The suspect, considered to have “religious extremist inclinations,” posted support for the Islamic State group and called for support for the war in Syria.</p> <p>The man was charged with terrorism offenses. If convicted, he faces up to 10 years in prison.</p> <p>No Albanians have joined extremist groups in Syria and Iraq in the past six to seven years, according to the authorities.</p> <p>Before that, scores of Albanians joined radical groups in Syria and Iraq, although mainstream religious leaders urged believers not to become members.</p> <p>About two-thirds of Albania's 2.8 million inhabitants are Muslims.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 UK trend: young arrests for terrorism
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/u-k-police-see-upward-trend-in-young-people-arrested-for-terrorism-offenses/
GIST	<p>Two teenagers have been arrested in the U.K. on suspicion of terrorism offenses, as part of an ongoing investigation being led by the Metropolitan Police's (Met) Counter Terrorism Command.</p> <p>An 18-year-old man was arrested at an address in Essex on May 18 on suspicion of encouraging terrorism. He was detained and a warrant of further detention application was granted by Westminster Magistrates' Court, allowing detectives to keep him in custody until May 25. He is being held at a London police station while enquiries continue.</p> <p>On May 20, a 17-year-old girl was arrested at an address in east London as part of the same investigation. She was taken to a London police station and a warrant of further detention application was granted by Westminster Magistrates' Court, allowing detectives to keep her in custody until May 27.</p> <p>The investigation related to alleged offenses linked to extreme islamist ideology.</p> <p>Commander Richard Smith, head of the Met's Counter Terrorism Command, said: "We have seen three teenagers arrested this week by Met officers for terrorism offenses, albeit as part of separate investigations. We need to let this investigation run its course, but it is a further indication of a concerning upward trend in police action against younger people for terrorism-related matters.</p> <p>"Across the country, police are working hard to try and prevent young people from being radicalized, and acting quickly when it is suspected that offenses have been committed.</p> <p>"Police rely on information from the public in our mission to tackle terrorism. If you see or hear something unusual or suspicious and think someone may be engaging in terrorist activity, trust your instincts and contact police."</p> <p>The arrests come as a 14-year-old boy from Darlington was convicted for possessing terrorist related documents. Following his arrest by Counter Terrorism Policing North East in June 2021, it was apparent the teenager held extreme views. He was charged in January 2022 with three terrorism offenses and pleaded guilty. On May 20, he was sentenced to a 12 month referral order.</p> <p>Police urge the public to visit the www.actearly.uk website to find out how to seek help and support for anyone at risk of being radicalized.</p> <p>Detective Superintendent Matt Davison of Counter Terrorism Policing North East said: "We know it can seem like a big step to share your worries but in many cases the right support will come through education and health professionals and there isn't a need for further police involvement. The key, however, is to report your concerns early so we can agree the appropriate support before the situation escalates into something more serious, or offenses are committed".</p>
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HEADLINE	05/24 Taliban: control of airports to UAE company
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/05/24/afghanistan-uae-airports-kabul/
GIST	<p>KABUL — The Taliban is handing over control of the country's airports to a company based in the United Arab Emirates, according to a statement from the prime minister's office Tuesday.</p> <p>A memorandum of understanding was signed Tuesday in Kabul "for the control and management of the airports in Afghanistan" by Taliban acting first deputy prime minister Abdul Ghani Baradar and Razack Aslam Mohammed Abdur Razack of GAC Dubai, a shipping and logistics company. The agreement applies to airports in Kabul, Kandahar and Herat.</p>

	<p>The deal will only apply to the logistics at the airports and not security, which has been a sticking point in past discussions with potential partners to manage the sites. When Qatari engineering team were working on the airport they were accompanied by their own private security.</p> <p>The agreement was reached “after long negotiations,” Baradar said at the signing. He added that he hoped the development would be “another step” to encourage international investment in Afghanistan to ease the country’s “suffering.”</p> <p>“This will open the door for other countries” to invest, he said. “All countries that are interested in investment in Afghanistan, we can guarantee their security.”</p> <p>Razack said he believed the agreement would bring the business community back to Afghanistan along with airline companies.</p> <p>“The international airlines which have been away from this country in the last few months will come back to us,” he told journalists.</p> <p>Afghanistan’s main international airport in Kabul was ransacked in August as the city’s security forces melted away and Taliban fighters took control of the capital.</p> <p>Thousands of Afghans desperate to flee destroyed critical machinery such as radar and communications equipment, forcing nearly all international commercial airlines to suspend flights to Afghanistan.</p> <p>The handover of control of the facility to a company with the technological expertise to repair and operate an international airport could be the first step toward the resumption of foreign flights more than nine months since the Taliban takeover.</p> <p>Currently, Afghan carriers Ariana and Kam Air are the only airlines that fly internationally.</p> <p>Qatar initially provided engineering teams to partially repair some navigation and radio systems that allowed for Afghan airlines to resume service. But without fully functioning radar, the insurance costs associated with using the Kabul airport make commercial operations largely unviable.</p> <p>Afghanistan is battling a spiraling economic crisis, and some Taliban officials have called for international investment to ease unemployment and inflation. But for most companies and banks, economic sanctions on Taliban leaders are the most significant barrier to investment.</p> <p>GAC Dubai, according to its website, is based in Dubai’s Jebel Ali Free Zone and first set up in the UAE in the 1960s. It provides shipping, logistics and marine services.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	05/23 ‘Adopt a wasp’; monitor Asian giant hornets
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/adopt-wasp-help-monitor-asian-giant-hornets/TFIQF24SMJBHRJFAMIMJ7T2M4Q/
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. — Adopting a wasp nest may not sound like an activity you want to take part in, but the Washington State Department of Agriculture said monitoring one can help them find Asian giant hornets.</p> <p>Over the last two years, people who live in Whatcom County said they have noticed hornets attacking paper wasp nests. Last year, WSDA said it tracked a hornet and saw it repeatedly visiting the same paper wasp nest, with each visit lasting five to ten minutes. The hornet removed paper wasp larvae during the visits.</p>

Starting in June, citizens who want to participate can locate paper wasp nests that they can monitor through Oct. 30. They then log the nest locations using the [Adopt A Paper Wasp registration](#) form, register them online to get a site ID, and then complete weekly check-ins and report them online. People can register starting June 1. Find [more information at this link](#).

A weekly check-in involves observing any hornet or wasp activity at the nests. WSDA asks volunteers to monitor the nests for at least five minutes during the day once a week, but nests can be checked as long and as often as the volunteer likes. [Click here to report and access the check-in form](#).

Although anyone in Washington can participate in adopting a paper wasp nest, WSDA is particularly interested in observations from Whatcom, Skagit, Island, San Juan, Snohomish, King, Jefferson and Clallam counties.

If you think you've spotted an Asian giant hornet, which would be significantly larger than a paper wasp, WSDA asks that volunteers safely take a photo and report it at agr.wa.gov/hornets or by emailing hornets@agr.wa.gov.

How to identify paper wasps

According to WSDA:

"Paper wasps can grow to about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch long and have a well-defined 'wasp waist' that makes them easy to identify. Paper wasps are typically not aggressive and do not readily attack people, but they can sting if threatened. They form small colonies and build hanging, open comb nests on building eaves, frames, abandoned cars, or branches of trees and shrubs. Paper wasp nests vary in size and are usually gray to brown in color. They are made up of many exposed cells that are less than an inch deep. Nests typically range from the size of a quarter to as wide as a coffee can lid but can be larger."

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HEADLINE	05/23 Hot, deadly summer; frequent blackouts
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/a-hot-deadly-summer-is-coming-with-frequent-blackouts-in-u-s-and-globally/
GIST	<p><i>Bloomberg</i> - Global power grids are about to face their biggest test in decades with electricity generation strangled in the world's largest economies.</p> <p>War. Drought. Production shortages. Historically low inventories. And pandemic backlash. Energy markets across the planet have been put through the wringer over the past year, and consumers have suffered the consequences of soaring prices. But, somehow, things are on track to get even worse.</p> <p>Blame the heat. Summer in much of the Northern Hemisphere is a typical peak for electricity use. This year, it's going to be sweltering as climate change tightens its grip. It's already so hot in parts of South Asia that the air temperatures are blistering enough to cook raw salmon. Scientists are predicting scorching months ahead for the U.S. Power use will surge as homes and businesses crank up air conditioners.</p> <p>The problem is that energy supplies are so fragile that there just won't be enough to go around, and power cuts will put lives at risk when there are no fans or air conditioners to provide relief from searing temperatures.</p> <p>Asia's heat wave has caused hourslong daily blackouts, putting more than 1 billion people at risk across Pakistan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and India, with little relief in sight.</p> <p>Six Texas power plants failed earlier this month as the summer heat just began to arrive, offering a preview of what's to come. At least a dozen U.S. states from California to the Great Lakes are at risk of electricity outages this summer.</p>

Power supplies will be tight in China and Japan. South Africa is poised for a record year of power cuts. And Europe is in a precarious position that's held up by Russia — if Moscow cuts off natural gas to the region, that could trigger rolling outages in some countries.

“War and sanctions are disrupting supply and demand, and that's coupled with extreme weather and an economic rebound from COVID boosting power demand,” said Shantanu Jaiswal, a BloombergNEF analyst. “The confluence of so many factors is quite unique. I can't recall the last time they all happened together.”

Why blackouts bring suffering and economic pain

Without power, human welfare will be under duress. Poverty, age and proximity to the equator will increase the likelihood of illness and death from unrelenting temperatures. Prolonged outages would mean that tens of thousands may also lose access to clean water.

If blackouts persist, and businesses shutter, that will also bring huge economic shock.

In India, power shortages in many states are already nearing levels from 2014, when they were estimated to have shaved about 5% off the country's gross domestic product. That would mean a reduction of almost \$100 billion should the outages become more widespread and last through the year. A run on electricity would also likely contribute to more gains for power and fuel markets, raising utility bills and further fanning inflation.

When plants on the Texas power grid failed this month, wholesale power prices in Houston briefly jumped above the \$5,000 a megawatt-hour price cap, surging 22 times higher than the average cost of on-peak power that had been secured for the day.

The world is grappling with “more than two years of global supply chain distress caused by the pandemic, the spreading fallout from the war in Ukraine and extreme weather caused by climate change,” said Henning Gloystein, an analyst at Eurasia Group. “The main risk is that if we see major blackouts on top of all the aforementioned problems this year, that could trigger some form of humanitarian crisis in terms of food and energy shortages on a scale not seen in decades.”

How the energy transition brings strain

This year might enter the record books for the biggest-ever strain on global power, and the hurdles aren't likely to go away anytime soon. Climate change means that the extreme heat waves of today will become more common, continuing to mount pressure on electricity supplies.

At the same time, a lack of investment in fossil fuels in recent years coupled with strong demand growth, especially in Asian emerging markets, should keep markets tight for the next few years, said Alex Whitworth, an analyst with Wood Mackenzie Ltd. in Shanghai. And while wind and solar's share of total capacity is expected to soar over the next decade, until energy storage facilities catch up to the shift, that will place even more stress on grids, he said.

“You'll be facing a supply scare every time there's clouds or storms or a wind drought for a week,” Whitworth said. “We really expect these problems to get worse in the next five years.”

Of course, the switch to renewable power is crucial in the fight against climate change. Burning even more coal now to cope with the energy shortage would just increase emissions, creating a vicious cycle that can lead to more heat waves and more strain on grids.

Here's a look at what's happening across the globe.

The United States

Supplies of natural gas, the No. 1 power-plant fuel in the U.S., are constrained nationwide and prices are soaring. Power in much of the country and part of Canada will be stretched, according to the North

American Electric Reliability Corporation. It's among the most dire assessments yet from the regulatory body. Consumers will be asked to step up to help keep the grids stable by curtailing their consumption.

In California, the most populous state, gas supplies are clipped even further because of a pipeline rupture last year that has limited imports. Plus, climate change is fueling drought, severely curbing hydropower supplies. The California Independent System Operator said this month that the state may be at risk of blackouts for the next few summers amid extreme weather.

On the 15-state grid operated by the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO), consumers in 11 states are at risk of outages. MISO, which serves about 42 million people, projected it has "insufficient" power generation to meet the highest demand periods this summer, especially in its Midwest states. The grid has never before given a warning of this kind before the start of summer demand.

In Texas, the grid "is still at risk" of shortages despite the state's scramble to improve resilience after a February 2021 winter storm that left millions in the dark for days, said Gary Cunningham, director of market research at brokerage Tradition Energy.

Aging infrastructure and maintenance delays during the pandemic have added to the problems of more severe weather, said Teri Viswanath, lead economist for power, energy and water at CoBank ACB.

"The U.S. is experiencing more outages globally than any other industrialized nation," she said. "About 70% of our grid is nearing end of life."

Asia

The epicenter of the outages so far has been South and Southeast Asia, where brutal heat waves have put air conditioners on full blast. Blackouts have been basically nationwide in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Myanmar, home to a combined 300 million people. And in India, 16 of the nation's 28 states — home to more than 700 million people — have been grappling with outages of two to 10 hours a day, a state official said this month.

India's government has recently directed firms to increase purchases of expensive foreign coal, while also rolling back environmental protocols for mine expansions to try to increase fuel supply. But it remains to be seen whether these moves will ease the strain. The looming monsoon season should bring cooler temperatures and trim energy demand, though it can also flood mining regions and hamper fuel supply.

In Vietnam, the state-owned utility has been bracing for power shortages for more than a month as demand rises while domestic coal supply has sagged and foreign fuel costs have surged.

In China, where coal shortages led to widespread power curtailments last year, officials have promised to keep the lights on in 2022 and have pressed coal miners to boost output to a record. Even so, industry officials have warned that the power situation will be tight this summer in the country's heavily industrialized south, which is far from inland mining hubs and therefore more reliant on expensive foreign coal and gas.

Japan had a power scare in March, when a cold wave triggered a demand surge just days after an earthquake had knocked several coal and gas plants offline. Power supply is expected to be tight during the upcoming summer months, and demand will likely exceed supply again next winter as well, according to grid forecasts. The Tokyo Metropolitan Government has started a campaign for energy conservation, asking residents to take measures like watching less television.

Europe

The risk of blackouts is lower in Europe, because fewer people use air conditioning at home. The continent is also racing to fill its gas storage.

But there's little room for error. A dry spring in Norway has limited hydropower supplies. Adding pressure to prices and supplies are extended outages at Electricite de France SA's nuclear reactors. The

	<p>region's biggest producer cut its nuclear output target for a third time this year, the latest sign that Europe's power crisis is worsening.</p> <p>If Russia were to cut off natural gas supplies to the region, that could be enough to trigger rolling blackouts in some countries, said Fabian Ronningen, a power markets analyst for Rystad Energy.</p> <p>While he said the chances that Russia would make that bold move are "unlikely," his views have become more pessimistic as the war in Ukraine continues; two months ago, he said, he'd have put the chances at "highly unlikely."</p> <p>Some countries have been receiving huge imports of liquefied natural gas and would probably have adequate supplies to absorb the blow, including Spain, France and the UK. The story might be different in Eastern Europe, where nations including Greece, Latvia and Hungary use gas for a significant portion of their power and are heavily dependent on Russian supplies. That's where the potential would be highest for blackouts, Ronningen said.</p> <p>"I don't think European consumers can even imagine a scenario like that," he said. "It's never happened in our lifetime."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 South Asia heat wave: glimpse of future
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/south-asias-intense-heat-wave-a-sign-of-things-to-come/
GIST	<p>NEW DELHI (AP) — The devastating heat wave that has baked India and Pakistan in recent months was made more likely by climate change and is a glimpse of the region's future, international scientists said in a study released Monday.</p> <p>The World Weather Attribution group analyzed historical weather data that suggested early, long heat waves that impact a massive geographical area are rare, once-a-century events. But the current level of global warming, caused by human-caused climate change, has made those heat waves 30 times more likely.</p> <p>If global heating increases to 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) more than pre-industrial levels, then heat waves like this could occur twice in a century and up to once every five years, said Arpita Mondal, a climate scientist at the Indian Institute of Technology in Mumbai, who was part of the study.</p> <p>"This is a sign of things to come," Mondal said.</p> <p>The results are conservative: An analysis published last week by the United Kingdom's Meteorological Office said the heat wave was probably made 100 times more likely by climate change, with such scorching temperatures likely to reoccur every three years.</p> <p>The World Weather Attribution analysis is different as it is trying to calculate how specific aspects of the heat wave, such as the length and the region impacted, were made more likely by global warming. "The real result is probably somewhere between ours and the (U.K.) Met Office result for how much climate change increased this event," said Friederike Otto, a climate scientist at the Imperial College of London, who was also a part of the study.</p> <p>What is certain, though, is the devastation the heat wave has wreaked. India sweltered through the hottest March in the country since records began in 1901 and April was the warmest on record in Pakistan and parts of India. The effects have been cascading and widespread: A glacier burst in Pakistan, sending floods downstream; the early heat scorched wheat crops in India, forcing it to ban exports to nations reeling from food shortages due to Russia's war in Ukraine; it also resulted in an early spike in electricity demand in India that depleted coal reserves, resulting in acute power shortages affecting millions.</p>

Then there is the impact on human health. At least 90 people have died in the two nations, but the region's insufficient death registration means that this is likely an undercount. South Asia is the most affected by heat stress, according to an analysis by The Associated Press of a dataset published Columbia University's climate school. India alone is home to more than a third of the world's population that lives in areas where extreme heat is rising.

Experts agree the heat wave underscores the need for the world to not just combat climate change by cutting down greenhouse gas emissions, but to also adapt to its harmful impacts as quickly as possible. Children and the elderly are most at risk from heat stress, but its impact is also inordinately bigger for the poor who may not have access to cooling or water and often live in crowded slums that are hotter than leafier, wealthier neighborhoods.

Rahman Ali, 42, a ragpicker in an eastern suburb of the Indian capital New Delhi earns less than \$3 a day by collecting waste from people's homes and sorting it to salvage whatever can be sold. It's backbreaking work and his tin-roofed home in the crowded slum offers little respite from the heat.

"What can we do? If I don't work...we won't eat," said the father of two.

Some Indian cities have tried to find solutions. The western city of Ahmedabad was the first in South Asia to design a heat wave plan for its population of over 8.4 million, all the way back in 2013. The plan includes an early warning system that tells health workers and residents to prepare for heat waves, empowers administrations to keep parks open so that people can shade and provides information to schools so they're able to tweak their schedules.

The city has also been trying to "cool" roofs by experimenting with various materials absorb heat differently. Their aim is to build roofs that'll reflect the sun and bring down indoor temperatures by using white, reflective paint or cheaper materials like dried grass, said Dr. Dileep Mavalankar, who heads the Indian Institute of Public Health in western Indian city Gandhinagar and helped design the 2013 plan.

Most Indian cities are less prepared and India's federal government is now working with 130 cities in 23 heat wave-prone states for them to develop similar plans. Earlier this month, the federal government also asked states to sensitize health workers on managing heat-related illnesses and ensure that ice packs, oral rehydration salts, and cooling appliances in hospitals were available.

But Mavalankar, who wasn't part of the study, pointed to the lack of government warnings in newspapers or TV for most Indian cities and said that local administrations had just not "woken up to the heat."

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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	05/23 Mexico hotel shooting: 11 dead, 5 injured
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/mexico-hotel-shooting-massacre-dead-wounded
GIST	<p>A shooting at a Mexican hotel killed nearly a dozen people and injured several others Monday.</p> <p>Telemundo 52 reported that at least 11 people have died, and another five were injured at the Gala hotel and bar located on Celaya in the Mexican central state of Guanajuato around 10 p.m.</p> <p>A group of about 15 armed men wearing hoods hopped out of two trucks and opened fire on unsuspecting clients and employees at the hotel and bar. As more than 50 rounds rang out, the attackers reportedly also burned the storefronts of two businesses nearby using homemade bombs, according to the outlet.</p> <p>The suspects quickly fled the scene, as guests hearing the gunfire shuddered in hotel rooms. Multiple law enforcement agencies arrived at the scene to find four people, two men and two women, dead in the hotel, as well as another six, five additional women and one man, dead by the bar.</p>

	<p>Secretary of Citizen Security of Celaya, Ignacio Rivera Peralta, also responded to the scene, as did officers and investigative agents from the Regional Prosecutor's Office.</p> <p>Before the evening attack, authorities said they found plastic bags with at least three dismembered bodies Monday in the same neighborhood as the hotel shooting that would hours later. A cardboard box with purported threats from organized crime was found on top of the human remains.</p> <p>Local authorities registered several criminal organizations in the area, including one group known as the Santa Rosa de Lima Cartel, which is dedicated to huachicoleo, a term used to refer to people who commit regular theft and illegal sale of motor fuel, as well as peddling adulterated alcoholic beverages.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 Capitol rioter w/fire extinguisher jailed 33mo
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/23/maryland-man-capitol-attack-riots-sentence
GIST	<p>A Maryland man who draped himself in a far right-affiliated flag and sprayed a fire extinguisher at police during the deadly Capitol attack on January 6 has been sentenced to nearly three years in prison, according to federal court records.</p> <p>Matthew Ryan Miller, 23, pleaded guilty in February to felony obstruction of an official proceeding – that day's joint congressional session to certify Joe Biden's win over Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election – as well as assaulting, resisting or impeding police officers.</p> <p>At a hearing on Monday, Miller was sentenced to two years and nine months. Judge Randolph Moss also ordered Miller to spend two years on probation after his release and to pay \$2,000 in restitution.</p> <p>Federal prosecutors had asked the judge for a sentence of four years and three months. Seeking leniency for his client, Miller's attorney, A Eduardo Balarezo, argued that the defendant was abusing alcohol and marijuana and therefore was not thinking logically on the day of the Capitol riots.</p> <p>"Matthew is a young man who made a terrible decision," Balarezo wrote in a court filing ahead of the sentencing. "He recognizes that his personal conduct and participation in the riot were not born of a rational decision but rather were fueled by alcohol and marijuana abuse.</p> <p>"He fully accepts responsibility for what he has done and is not making excuses."</p> <p>Balarezo also condemned Trump's claims that the 2020 presidential election was stolen from him by electoral fraudsters as "lies" that drove Miller to join other Trump supporters in the nation's capital on the day the riots occurred because he thought "it would be cool to be part of history".</p> <p>According to prosecutors, Miller had traveled from his home in Cooksville, Maryland, and donned a black cowboy hat and a Washington Capitals jersey. He also tied around his neck the flag of Maryland and the Gadsden flag, which shows a hissing snake on a yellow background and is popular with far-right extremists.</p> <p>A summary of the case endorsed by Miller said he used a metal barrier as a ladder to climb a Capitol wall before urging others to help him push against police, waving his hand and shouting, "Come on," as well as "One, two, three, push!" while his companions yelled, "Heave! Ho!" and rhythmically pressed on towards a tunnel entrance being guarded by officers.</p> <p>In the tunnel, Miller sprayed a fire extinguisher at officers, prosecutors wrote in records. Another mob member, Robert Palmer, picked up that extinguisher and sprayed it at officers, before tossing it at them. Palmer pleaded guilty to a role in the riot and got a prison sentence of five years and three months.</p> <p>There was evidence Miller had been to at least one rally staged by the Proud Boys, a far-right group classified by the FBI as "extremist", who had members at the forefront of the Capitol attack. Yet</p>

	<p>prosecutors did not provide any evidence or allege that Miller was working with the Proud Boys that day, though they noted that he did belong to an organization which named itself the Patriotic American Cowboys.</p> <p>A bipartisan Senate report linked seven deaths to the Capitol attack. More than 840 people have been charged with federal crimes related to the January 6 riot, and nearly 300 of them have pleaded guilty, largely to misdemeanors. About 160 of them had been sentenced entering this month.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 Court limits challenges to bad legal help
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/23/us/politics/supreme-court-ineffective-counsel.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Ruling against two Arizona death row inmates, the Supreme Court on Monday sharply cut back on prisoners’ ability to challenge their convictions in federal court by arguing that their lawyers had been ineffective in state court proceedings.</p> <p>The 6-to-3 decision split along ideological lines. Justice Clarence Thomas, writing for the majority, said that a federal court considering a habeas corpus petition “may not conduct an evidentiary hearing or otherwise consider evidence beyond the state-court record based on ineffective assistance of state post-conviction counsel.”</p> <p>He based his decision on language in a 1996 federal law limiting habeas corpus petitions, on the judicial system’s interest in finality and on state sovereignty.</p> <p>In dissent, Justice Sonia Sotomayor wrote that the majority “all but overrules two recent precedents that recognized a critical exception to the general rule that federal courts may not consider claims on habeas review that were not raised in state court.”</p> <p>She added: “Two men whose trial attorneys did not provide even the bare minimum level of representation required by the Constitution may be executed because forces outside of their control prevented them from vindicating their constitutional right to counsel.”</p> <p>One of the men, David Ramirez, fatally stabbed his girlfriend, Mary Ann Gortarez, and her 15-year-old daughter, Candie. Mr. Ramirez was convicted and sentenced to death in state court. In later proceedings in federal court, his lawyers argued that his trial lawyer had failed to investigate or present evidence about his intellectual and developmental disabilities that might have prompted the jury to show leniency.</p> <p>The other inmate, Barry Lee Jones, was convicted of causing the death of his girlfriend’s 4-year-old daughter, Rachel Gray. Justice Sotomayor wrote that “Jones’s trial counsel failed to undertake even a cursory investigation and, as a result, did not uncover readily available medical evidence that could have shown that Rachel sustained her injuries when she was not in Jones’s care.”</p> <p>In a pair of decisions about a decade ago — Martinez v. Ryan in 2012 and Trevino v. Thaler in 2013 — the Supreme Court allowed some federal challenges to state convictions to proceed where lawyers in the state courts had been ineffective at trial and in post-conviction challenges.</p> <p>On Monday, Justice Thomas wrote that those decisions did not contemplate elaborate hearings in federal court to consider new evidence.</p> <p>“The sprawling evidentiary hearing in Jones is particularly poignant,” he wrote by way of example. “Ostensibly to assess cause and prejudice under Martinez, the district court ordered a seven-day hearing that included testimony from no fewer than 10 witnesses, including defense trial counsel, defense post-conviction counsel, the lead investigating detective, three forensic pathologists, an emergency medicine and trauma specialist, a biomechanics and functional human anatomy expert, and a crime scene and bloodstain pattern analyst.”</p>

“This wholesale re-litigation of Jones’s guilt,” Justice Thomas added, “is plainly not what Martinez envisioned.”

Justice Sotomayor responded that the hearing was required because Mr. Jones’s lawyers had been inadequate. “Far from constituting an inappropriate and ‘wholesale re-litigation of Jones’s guilt,’” she wrote, “the district court’s hearing was wide-ranging precisely because the breakdown of the adversarial system in Jones’s case was so egregious.”

The Supreme Court’s decision, Justice Sotomayor added, “will leave many people who were convicted in violation of the Sixth Amendment to face incarceration or even execution without any meaningful chance to vindicate their right to counsel.”

Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. and Justices Samuel A. Alito Jr., Neil M. Gorsuch, Brett M. Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett joined Justice Thomas’s majority opinion. Justices Stephen G. Breyer and Elena Kagan joined Justice Sotomayor’s dissent.

Robert M. Loeb, who represented Mr. Ramirez and Mr. Jones in the Supreme Court, expressed disappointment in the decision.

“The court’s ruling leaves the fundamental constitutional right to trial counsel with no effective mechanism for enforcement in these circumstances,” he said in a statement. “The decision misreads the federal statute, produces untenable results never envisioned by Congress and amounts to an assault on basic fairness in the criminal justice system.”

Mark Brnovich, Arizona’s attorney general, welcomed the ruling in the case, Shinn v. Ramirez, No. 20-1009.

“The wheels of justice take time to turn, but they should not be stuck for decades,” he said in a statement. “I applaud the Supreme Court’s decision because it will help refocus society on achieving justice for victims, instead of on endless delays that allow convicted killers to dodge accountability for their heinous crimes.”

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HEADLINE	05/23 FBI: phone scams target elderly
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/phone-scams-target-elderly-fbi/
GIST	<p><i>Chesterfield, Virginia</i> — Three years ago, Sherri got a phone call warning that her bank records had been found in a car loaded with illegal drugs.</p> <p>"I went into a state of shock," she said.</p> <p>The caller said he was a Drug Enforcement Administration agent and demanded she send cash to avoid trouble.</p> <p>"All I can remember is sending money all over the country," Sherri, who asked CBS News not to use her full name, said, adding that she sent the scammers "hundreds of thousands of dollars."</p> <p>The number of scams targeting Americans over the age of 60 exploded during the pandemic, with upwards of 92,000 victims in 2021 alone, according to the FBI. Last year, older Americans were scammed out of \$1.7 billion, a 74% increase from 2020, according to a recent FBI report.</p> <p>"Financially, I'm ruined," Sherri said.</p> <p>Even former FBI and CIA director William Webster was targeted in a Jamaican lottery scam in 2014 when a caller claimed he won a sweepstakes. The unsolicited caller became threatening when Webster declined to pay \$50,000 to collect the winnings.</p>

	<p>"If it can happen to me, it can happen to you," Webster warned in a public service announcement.</p> <p>FBI agent Ronald Miller said the scammers who targeted Sherri have stolen \$10 million to date. The scammers work overseas with U.S. collaborators who move the cash.</p> <p>Miller told CBS News that older Americans are often targeted because, "They're lonely. They're trustworthy. They believe it's legit."</p> <p>There are 5,000 others out there like Sherri and only a few arrests have been made, according to the FBI.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 Active shooter incidents rose over 50%
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/active-shooter-incidents-2021-higher-than-2020/
GIST	<p>The number of active shooter incidents in the U.S. rose by 52.5% from 2020 to 2021, and over four years, from 2017 to 2021, there was a 96.8% increase, the FBI said in a report published Monday. The bureau noted that the data over those four years shows "an upward trend."</p> <p>In 2021, the FBI designated a total of 61 shootings in 30 states as "active shooter incidents," resulting in 103 people killed and 140 wounded, excluding the gunmen.</p> <p>Last year saw the highest number of deaths as a result of active shootings – 103 total – since 2017, a whopping 171% increase from 2020.</p> <p>The FBI defines an active shooter as "one or more individuals actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a populated area." The definition implies the use of a firearm, and the "active" descriptor refers to the "ongoing nature of an incident, and thus the potential for the response to affect the outcome." In comparison, a mass killing is defined as "three or more killings in a single incident."</p> <p>Twelve of the 61 active shooter incidents also met the criteria for mass killings.</p> <p>Last year saw 61 active shooter incidents carried out by 61 distinct shooters – 60 male, 1 female. Shooters ranged in age from 12 to 67 years old. Fourteen were killed by law enforcement, while four shooters were killed by armed citizens. One shooter died in a car accident during pursuit by law enforcement and 11 shooters died by suicide. In total, 30 gunmen were apprehended by law enforcement, while one shooter remains at large. Just two of the 61 gunmen wore body armor during the incident.</p> <p>Of these incidents, six occurred in California. Five incidents each occurred in Georgia and Texas, while four each occurred in Colorado and Florida.</p> <p>FBI spotted a "roving active shooters" trend emerging in 2021, whereby shooters targeted their victims in multiple locations, throughout the course of one or more days.</p> <p>The FBI released its "Active Shooter Incidents in the United States in 2021" report Monday afternoon.</p> <p>The FBI's report does not include gun-related incidents classified as gang violence, drug violence, self defense, domestic disputes, hostage situations, crossfire related to another criminal act or "an action that appeared not to have put other people in peril."</p> <p>In a statement, the FBI said it "remains steadfast in its efforts to train private citizens, as it is imperative that citizens understand the risks faced and the resources available in an active shooter situation."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/23 NYC transit crime rate holds steady
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/recent-shootings-york-city-transit-crime-holds-steady/story?id=84908004

GIST

Daniel Enriquez, 48, was shot and killed in [an unprovoked attack on a Q train](#) Sunday in New York City as it headed into Manhattan. The tragedy comes just a few weeks after a gunman opened fire on an N train subway car during rush hour, shooting and injuring 10 people.

The recent spate of crimes on the city's public transportation has left the city scrambling for answers as ridership continues to climb back toward pre-pandemic levels and more people return to riding with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

Transit crime is up 58% from this time last year, though April showed a dip in crimes on public transportation, [according to New York Police Department data](#).

When compared with 2020, crime is up only about 1%. However, the amount of transit crime in New York City has remained steady since 2006, with the exception of 2021's crime dip.

Citywide, crime has gone up since the first two years of the pandemic when the city began to shut down; it's up 40% from 2021, and 37% from 2020, according to NYPD data.

However, compared to the 80s and 90s, crime is down 72% from 1993, according to city data.

"[Enriquez's death] just renewed our calls to deal with the proliferation of guns on our street, even after the bullet takes the life of an innocent person, the emotional trauma continues to rip apart the anatomy of our city," Mayor Eric Adams said [in a press conference on Monday](#).

Adams vowed to address public safety needs following the death of subway rider [Michelle Go](#) in January. She was killed after being pushed in front of an oncoming train.

At a press conference following Go's death, Adams said the attack highlights the importance of those in crisis receiving mental health services to ensure that the city's streets "above ground and below ground" are safe.

He announced in January that he would deploy more police officers into the subway systems alongside mental health workers, and enforce MTA rules, such as fare enforcement, more strictly.

"[We'll] just really double down on our concerns that our system must be safe, must be safe from actual crime, which we are going to do and it must be safe from those who feel as though there's a total level of disorder in our subway system," Adams said at a Jan. 18 press conference.

At least 1,000 officers were added to the subway's police force in an attempt to combat crime shortly after the announcement, according [to local newspaper AMNY](#).

Adams has since also placed emphasis on mental health and community building as tools for crime prevention. He also said he hopes to target the prevalence of gun violence and ghost guns as a key issue in the city's fight against violence.

"By the time someone carries a gun, discharges a gun, we already failed as a city," Adams said at a May 20 conference, advocating for more community-based services. "Everyone must be on board because we have to prevent as well as apprehend those crimes that are taking place in the city."

MTA CEO Janno Lieber called Sunday's fatal shooting "an incredible setback" for the effort to get the city back to normal after the pandemic curtailed ridership.

Still, MTA's ridership has been seemingly left unaffected by reports of crime, as ridership levels continue to set pandemic-era records, marking the highest totals since March 2020.

"This week, New York reached a milestone in transit ridership, one of the most encouraging indicators that our comeback from COVID is right on track," New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said in a recent statement on

	the records. "Public transportation systems are the lifeblood of New York, and we will continue doing everything in our power to bring riders back, helping drive our economic recovery."
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HEADLINE	05/23 'Incendiary devices' in car that hit 3 children
SOURCE	https://ktla.com/news/local-news/3-children-struck-by-vehicle-outside-santa-ana-school-incendiary-devices-found/
GIST	<p>Police found "incendiary devices" in a vehicle that struck three children outside a Santa Ana elementary school Monday morning, authorities said.</p> <p>The vehicle drove onto a sidewalk near Taft Elementary School and hit the three children around 8:30 a.m., according to the Santa Ana Police Department.</p> <p>The children were all taken to a hospital, where they were listed in stable condition.</p> <p>Responding officers found the driver with what appeared to be a self-inflicted stab wound, Sgt. Maria Lopez told KTLA.</p> <p>Then, while searching the vehicle that hit the children, police found a "suspicious incendiary device" inside, police said.</p> <p>An Orange County bomb squad was called to the scene, leading to the discovery of three more incendiary devices in the vehicle, according to authorities.</p> <p>Investigators later found out that the suspect had trespassed into Taft Elementary just before the collision and was escorted off campus, Santa Ana police said.</p> <p>Witness Isaias Vazquez told KTLA he lives near the crash site, and was one of the people who ran to the children's aid after the crash.</p> <p>"I see the kids on the ground, one's in the middle of the street just laying down motionless," Vazquez said. "As I go to tend to them, parents are... just distraught, screaming, and I see an individual walking towards us with a knife in his hand so immediately I called the cops."</p> <p>Vazquez said the driver then turned around and walked away towards the car.</p> <p>Authorities have not confirmed whether the driver had a knife, but said the suspect was hospitalized for what appeared to be self-inflicted knife wounds.</p> <p>Lopez said police are still investigating what the driver's intent was and whether he had any connection to the school.</p> <p>Authorities provided no further details on the suspect and it's unclear what type of incendiary devices were allegedly in the vehicle.</p> <p>Police said the campus was cleared and classes at Taft Elementary resumed as scheduled.</p>
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